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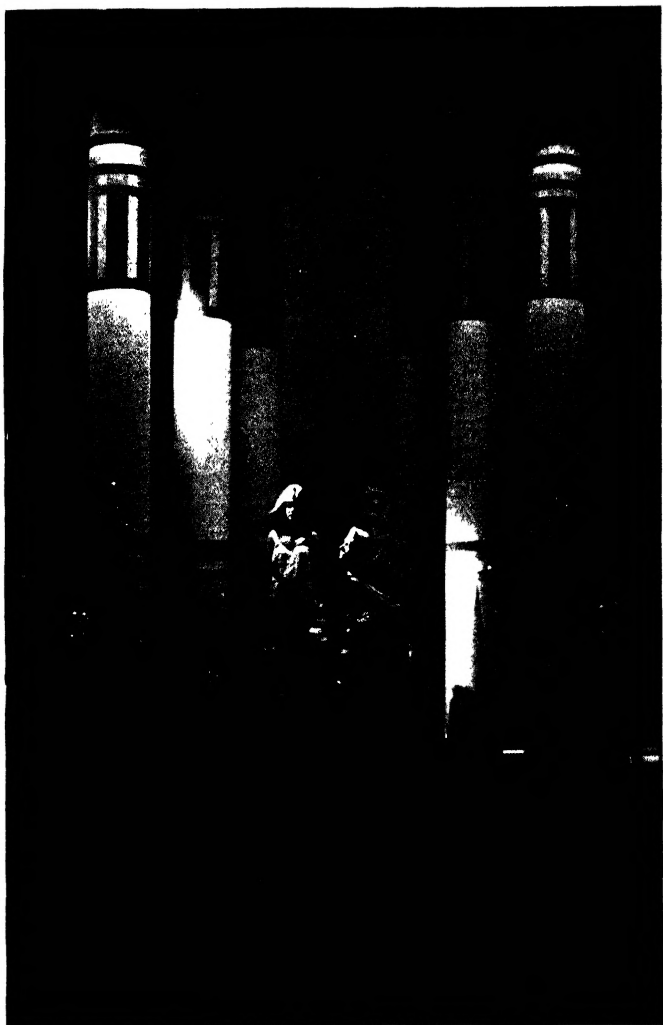
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# PRODUCING PLAYS

A Handbook for Producers and Players



CÆSAR AND CLEOPATRA. By Bernard Shaw  
The Cambridge Festival Theatre

*Produced by T. G. Saville*

# ✓ PRODUCING PLAYS

A Handbook for Producers and Players

By

C. B. PURDOM

*With Illustrations*

LONDON AND TORONTO  
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TO THE MEMORY OF  
JACK DENT  
AND  
S. H. DONNELLY  
TWO AMATEURS OF ACTING





## PREFACE

This book has been written to assist amateur producers of plays. A good stage producer is born, not made; but there are large numbers of people who take part in plays as amateurs and some of them have to become responsible for production. Very few of these producers have any opportunity for training themselves, and though they may be born producers they need some knowledge of stage technique. That technique, like all other technical knowledge, is only to be gained by training and practice. What I have attempted to do in this book is to give some guidance based on my own experience that will help amateurs to get their practice in the right way.

It may be asked, why cannot amateurs rely upon professional producers? The answer is that there are not enough to go round. As the best producer is one who knows most about the practical working of the stage and combines with that knowledge the powers of an artist of the theatre, he is likely to be a professional actor. But it is unfortunately true that professional actors are by no means necessarily capable producers. One has only to look at the professional stage to see that good producers are extremely rare, and such producers are not available for amateurs. The professional actor who specialises in amateur production is sel-

dom much good for anything beyond the mere elements. He is frequently ignorant of much that he should know about the mechanical working of the theatre, and even if he has such knowledge and is himself a good actor it does not follow that he has any skill in production.

Any professional actor can teach any amateur a great deal, and no wise amateur will fail to acquire such knowledge whenever he gets the chance. But production is another affair altogether. Amateurs should beware of depending upon professional actors who will put them through a play for the sake of a fee. They will learn very little in that way, and will achieve little more than imitation of the professional stage.

If an amateur company does by chance find a professional actor who really knows his business and has capacity as a producer, they should stick to him. He will be able to do for them more than any but the most exceptional amateur producer can do. Most amateur companies, however, will have to depend upon themselves and find their producers from among their own number. This will mean for the persons concerned an immense amount of hard work, ceaseless study of plays on the stage, and as much practical experience of the actual working of the theatre as possible.

Amateur playing is worth while when done with sufficient thoroughness because the drama is a popular art, that is an art in which many people can take part, with an appeal to the great mass of the public. It is not an art, therefore, that need be left wholly to professionals. I do not say that there is any particular merit in amateur playing as such; for I am only too conscious

that much amateur work has nothing to be said for it. Too many amateur companies are satisfied with incompetent slipshod work. This need not be if they would take sufficient trouble, and in particular if they would encourage the efforts of capable producers. The best of the amateur companies know this, and their work therefore ranks high and is worthy of serious critical attention.

The new amateur dramatic movement is something quite different from amateur theatricals, that old established social amusement. It is an interest in the drama for its own sake. Those who take part in it as producers, actors and designers are interested in the technique of the theatre. Its most satisfactory feature, both in England and America, is that many amateurs are seeking to produce their own work, that is to do plays in their own way, and also to do original plays.

The further development of this dramatic activity depends largely upon the skill and efforts of amateur producers, to whose direction amateur players subject themselves. I offer this book to producers as a contribution to their studies. While I have written it for them and for amateur players I have the hope that it may interest others who care about the theatre too. I have made the index pretty full and hope it will be found useful by readers.

I have to thank Mr. Cyril Nairne, Mr. C. Harold Ridge, Mr. C. F. Huggett and Mr. R. Hammond for help given me.

C. B. PURDOM



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## CHAPTER I

### THE PRODUCER

#### THE PRODUCER'S SPHERE

The actual term "producer" is comparatively recent,<sup>1</sup> not more than twenty years old; but the function is as old as the theatre, for there has always been someone responsible for the play. The nature of the responsibility and the degree in which it has been exercised have varied from time to time; but there has always been someone in authority over the stage, whether proprietor, stage-manager, actor-manager, or the person not any of these, whom we now call producer. The producer, as we understand him to-day, is not the actor, though he may act, nor the stage-manager, though he may stage-manage, neither does he belong to any other of the particular parts of theatrical organization. He is

<sup>1</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary, the "P" section of which was published in 1909, does not record its present meaning. The nearest that it gets to it is in one of the recorded meanings of the verb "to stage," "To bring, put (an opera, a tragedy, etc.) on the stage: to produce (it) in public." That looks something like what we mean by producing, but not precisely; for it means the act of bringing forward a play on the stage, as a theatrical manager who does no actual stage work is still said to produce a play, when he causes it to be produced. None of the other standard dictionaries of a later date that I have consulted records the meaning that we here attach to the word.

the man responsible for the actual presentation of the play on the stage as a completed whole.

It is the business of the producer to prepare the play for performance, to rehearse the players, and to put the play on the stage. He directs its interpretation from start to finish by controlling the players, the scenery, lighting, costumes and the use of the stage.

It is to be admitted that many producers attempt in practice much less than they should. They seem to pay attention to one thing or another and leave the rest to chance. They may study positions, or the interpretation of character, or endeavour to get certain pictorial effects, or they may worry about the pronunciation of words. The actors, the stage-manager, the property man and the scene designer do the rest. Though most plays nowadays have a producer's name printed on the programme it is not always easy to tell, from looking at the result, what he has done. Yet it should be possible to recognise a producer's work. The old actor-managers left their marks on the plays they presented. There was never any mistake, for instance, about the work of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree. A play put on the stage by him could be recognised at once, not only by its flamboyant anachronisms but by the careful preparations for his own entrances. Sir Charles Hawtrey, again, was an actor-manager who was also a producer of the highest order: it was a first-class stage education to watch the precision, balance and careful composition of any play for which he was responsible. Anyone who knows anything of the theatre can recognise a play produced by Mr. Granville-Barker,

Herr Max Reinhardt, Sir Nigel Playfair, or Mr. Theodore Komisarjevsky; though by bringing their names together I must not be understood to be attempting to place their work on the same level of achievement. But there are remarkably few producers whose productions bear evidence of their art. Too often they seem to throw the players together and never to look at the result.

What the producer needs to know about the stage amounts exactly to everything there is to know. As he has to employ the material available to get the required result he must necessarily know how to use it. He has to understand acting, the designing of scenery and costumes, the use of lighting, and how to get any effect the play requires. He must also be able to interpret the play as a dramatic work of the theatre, which means that he must be an artist, what we may call an artist of the theatre. He will have to depend upon other workers a great deal for scene, costumes and the use of the stage; for few men can expect to be finished masters of every detail of this complicated art. He will have to depend upon them as he depends upon his players. What he has to possess is the ability to use them. It has been said that the producer's function is somewhat similar to that of the conductor of an orchestra. He determines the pace, emphasis, form and spirit of the work given him. Unlike the conductor, he is not seen at the performance and may not even be present; but his influence should be as unmistakable.

The primary condition under which the producer

should work is that he be given complete control of the production. When the play has been decided upon and the parts allotted he should be the sole authority. As I shall show later on he should have a voice in these decisions; but once the play and players are in his hands they should remain there to the end.

### THE PRODUCER'S PERSONALITY

The producer must be one in whom the players have confidence. His personality must be right and he must understand his work. He is a leader and must be capable of leadership. He is a director, and must be able to direct. Mr. St. John Ervine, in one of his London *Observer* articles, said some amusing and true things on this matter:

Let it be understood, too, that a producer must be a person with a strong character. A young gentleman was once proposed to me as a producer, and my reply was to invite the proposer to look at the producer's face; a weak, dreepy-drippy sort of face, obviously belonging to a man with about as much personal force as there is in a penn'orth of suet. Conceive of such a man assembling a company of diverse men and women, most of them possessed of some kind of ardent temperament, and attempting to make a team of them. One actor of authority or an actress a bit above herself would make mince-meat of that producer. I have noticed that it is this kind of weak-as-water producer who yells and screams at his cast, or rather at those members of it who are not sufficiently established to be able to answer back. The man who understands his business, and is able to impose his authority upon the players, can do it without developing signs of the palsy.

The producer must be sure of himself. Not "cock-sure," but with the confidence that comes from a

thorough study of the play and of the means available to get the result he wants. If he goes quietly to work, making his purpose clear, letting the players understand the lines on which he is working, keeping a firm hold on himself as well as on them, he will have no difficulty.

A producer who is not sure of what he wants, who consults the players when in a difficulty and allows discussion of problems as they arise will never succeed. Players must be willing to subject themselves to his direction, obeying him honestly and cheerfully, giving him their unfaltering support; and the producer must respect their confidence and give them the leadership that they deserve.

Patience is the virtue that a producer needs above all other virtues. Patience with his players and their slowness, their misunderstandings, their wilfulness, with all those who assist him on the stage, with himself and the effort to overcome the inherent material difficulties of stage representation. He needs infinite capacity for taking pains, for attention to minute detail, and for sustaining his company voluntarily under the severest discipline. Any producer who attempts more than the casual control of the play, for which he is responsible must possess the gift of subordinating the personalities of the players to the combined effort that creates the finished play. It is because this gift is so rare and the passionate concentration in which it must be exercised is so seldom found that first-class producers are so few.

## THE PRODUCER AND THE AUTHOR

The methods of work of the producer are the subject of this book and will be discussed in the following chapters. There are certain general principles to be considered here. A producer must possess the power of visualising the play in his imagination. What is later to be shown upon the stage he must conceive in his own mind. The author has already had a conception of his play, which is conveyed in the printed book, and it is the business of the producer to realise that conception afresh in actual terms of the theatre. It is not necessary for the author to explain what he means—his work should do that for him.

Some authors like to produce their own plays. If they understand stage production there is every reason why they should; but an author is not necessarily a capable producer of his own play, any more than he is likely to be a suitable compositor for it in book form. The technique of playwriting and that of presenting it on the stage are distinct things. Unless an author understands the stage he should leave his play in the hands of a producer whom he can trust. He should see the play in rehearsal; he may offer suggestions, but otherwise he should leave it alone. I prefer authors to be out of the theatre during rehearsal, as a general rule; for they sometimes have extraordinary impulses to spoil their own work; though at a certain stage their presence can be useful. Mr. Bernard Shaw is an author who understands the theatre as well as any man alive; but I always feel disappointed with his own

productions of his plays. I remember particularly *Misalliance*, when originally produced at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, in 1910, and *Saint Joan* when first performed at the New Theatre, London, in 1924. I think he overemphasised the peculiar exaggerations of character when they occur in both plays, and got a certain roughness and unevenness of effect, which were unnecessary and unlike his writing.

### THE PRODUCER AS ARTIST

To come back to the producer himself. His "business" in Blake's words "is to create." Unless the producer works as an artist, unless, that is to say, he has power of imagination that he can call upon, he does nothing. To quote Blake again:

He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light than his perishing and mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all.

In the producer's mind the play should take form, move with rhythm and purpose, so that in the actual creative work of rehearsal he has a living model before his inner eye to which he can mould the visible material. That living model is not a mere pre-conception, a fixed idea, inflexible and hard; but a bright and vital image that guides and inspires what he does. He will not realise that vision in his actual accomplishment, of course. He will be disappointed, and will have to be content with what is far short of it; but it remains to give meaning, recognised by himself and by the discerning audience, to what he has attempted to do.



The producer will not convey this to his players or the stage-manager or electrician except in the terms of their own particular technique. They are not there to listen to rhapsodies upon the spirit of the play that so fascinates him, but to be told what to do. He has to keep the vision in his own mind but let himself be judged by the concrete result. Yet the vision he must have, whatever the play; for without it he is bound to fail.

"A fine play," says Mr. Theodore Komisarjevsky, "is capable of many interpretations."

The producer must make his own interpretation and subdue all else to that. . . . He must understand the meaning of the play and be able to convey it to the audience. Otherwise . . . the words are spoken, gestures are made, people move about the stage, but no significant meaning emerges as the play continues.<sup>2</sup>

It is the producer's business to convey the meaning of the play to the audience. If he does not understand it himself that is not likely to be done. Essentially the meaning of the play is conveyed in movement. It moves all the time that it is before the eyes of the audience, and in that movement its meaning is expressed. It does not move throughout at the same speed, nor on the same note; it changes, slows down, quickens, reaches its climax. Its sound is sometimes soft, sometimes loud. This is all in the producer's hands. He must give attention to the speed of the play as a whole and to the speed of each particular scene. That is why he should

<sup>2</sup> *Drama*. Feb. 1926, p. 107.





THE LADY OF BELMONT. By St. John Ervine

St. Pancras People's Theatre

*Produced by Maude Scott*



THE SAINTS' COMEDY. By F. Sladen-Smith

The Unmanned Society (Manchester)

*Produced by the Author*

time a play carefully in rehearsal, listening to it over and over again with his inner ear until he gets it right.

When the producer gets a play to do, the last thing he should remember is how it was done before. I always prefer to produce a play I have never seen. He should look at the play, however old, however well established in the tradition of the stage, as a new work. It is wrong to try to discover the old business and repeat it. The tricks and outworn business of the old actors should not be kept in Shakespeare or Sheridan or Goldsmith. They make these plays stale both to audience and players. The old business does not fit the actors of to-day; it is finished. Mr. Granville-Barker's three Shakespearean productions at the Savoy Theatre, London, in 1912, are memorable largely because he thought the plays out afresh and gave them new business.

Even with modern plays there is growing up a fixed tradition of playing: actors imitate one another, and producers do the same. This is unnecessary. Years ago I had a player in Shaw's *You Never Can Tell* doing the part of William, the waiter. He astonished me at one rehearsal by asking if Mr. Louis Calvert, who played the waiter at the Court Theatre, London, in 1905, put the sugar in McComas's whiskey at a moment not indicated by the author but where he, the player, remembered it as being effective. He was worried because he could not get it right.

#### PRODUCTION AND THE ACTOR

Sometimes one hears actors declare that if the producer were abolished and the actors allowed to

play their parts as they conceive them, the final result would be better than it is. It is proper for the actor to desire to feel his supremacy on the stage: the aim of production is to give him his setting; but the actor is necessarily egotistical and individualistic, and if left to himself would turn everybody else out of the theatre—author, designer, and every other technician—leaving himself alone with the audience. This natural tendency of the actor has to be checked by discipline, and by acceptance of the fact that he is dependent upon many other workers for his triumphs. The producer's duty is to bring out the fullest powers of the actor while keeping him in his right place in the play.

I have referred above to the matter of discipline. The necessity for this must be accepted by the actor. It means that he places himself under direction, that he offers himself for the service of the production as a whole. This throws a big responsibility upon the producer who accepts this offer and has to make use of it.

#### SOME COMMON FAULTS OF PRODUCTION

The importance of production is as great to the amateur as to the professional; for the chief faults of amateur performances are faults of production. The same statement might be truly made of the professional stage, but there the actors usually have sufficient experience to hide what would otherwise be seen as glaring faults, and can carry off through force of personality the most impossible situations. Amateurs do not usually possess these technical resources, so that any

weakness of production becomes obvious. It is not, however, always seen as such by the inexperienced spectator; and amateur players are often blamed for failure that is not theirs at all.

The work that is in the hands of others than the actual producer is often right. The staging good, the lighting well distributed, the costumes all they should be, the acting of individual parts excellent, all this being so because the stage-manager, the electrician, and some of the actors know their business and do it well. But the production as a whole may not hang together, and the play lack spirit and style because the producer has not secured command, or has not done his work completely, or, to be brief, because he does not know his job.

(a) *Lack of Balance and Inconsistency*

Some common minor faults of production are, (1) lack of balance in individual parts, (2) lack of balance between different parts of the play, and (3) inconsistency of interpretation. Lack of balance in the parts is usually due to wrong casting, which will be dealt with in a later chapter; but producers need to see that the personalities of individual players are used to create that conflict or harmony (as the case may be) that the play requires; and a showy player must not be allowed to out-play a weak player.

There must be harmony between the different parts of a play; it must, that is to say, be presented as a whole and not as a series of detached incidents. Inconsistency of interpretation, that is to say one character

in the same play playing as in farce and another as in comedy, or the same actor playing farce one moment and comedy the next, is a bad fault and one for which the producer must watch. It is not always easy to detect in rehearsal, however; but should be corrected immediately it shows itself.

*(b) Imperfect Playing Together*

The major faults are two, imperfect playing together, and failure to play up at the climax of the play. Unless players are familiar with one another's playing and with their own parts they cannot be got to play together, yet this is essential to the success of a play. There are some players who act for themselves and care nothing for the play or the other actors. These players should be done without if they do this deliberately: if it is unconscious it should be checked. It should be a settled principle with all amateur companies that a play is a joint production, a co-operative affair, in which each player depends upon all the rest. This is a subject to be discussed again later.

*(c) Missing the Climax*

The most common fault of all, and to my mind the worst, is failure to play up at the climax of the play. Every play has its moment, the incident around which all the other incidents centre. This must be got clear and definite. In nearly every amateur production I have seen it is handled weakly, or entirely overlooked. It



THE MARVELLOUS HISTORY OF ST BERNARD. By Henri Ghéon  
The Leeds Civic Playhouse

*Produced by Chas. F. Smith*



BACK TO METHUSELAH. By Bernard Shaw  
Sheffield Playgoers' Society (1924)





is the moment at which even the easiest play becomes difficult, and the difficult play almost beyond the amateur's powers of expression. It requires more than straight-forward playing. In my observation amateurs do not merely fail at this difficult moment, they show no consciousness of failure. They overlook the crisis of the play, so that the climax is never reached.

Now, the producer should work up to the climax, which is usually, of course, near or at the end of the play. It is for this that everyone has been waiting, and unless it is shown the play is bound to fail. If the play "comes off" here, a great deal of bad work elsewhere can be forgiven. What usually happens is that underplaying at the critical moment obscures what is happening. And amateurs who try to play well and intelligently are much given to underplaying, which is fatal to success.

#### HOW TO BECOME A PRODUCER

How, it may be asked, may one who desires to be a producer get the necessary knowledge? The professional actor will not find it easy; for though there are schools of acting there are no schools of stage production in England; in America, however, there are a number of good ones. He will probably have to teach himself by becoming a stage-manager. The amateur will find much greater difficulty; for both time and opportunity are needed. The man or woman who really means to master the subject will do it. To get to understand the mechanical parts of a stage is comparatively

easy, if one is given the run of a theatre, and a stage-manager who will take the trouble to let one see him work. There are schools for play production for amateurs in various places, as well as short courses which can be attended by those who have but a little time to spare.

The best thing is to get as much practice as possible in producing plays. Be ready to produce for anyone, anywhere, for the sake of experience. Also, and this is equally important, see as many plays as possible and study them carefully and in detail. Go to the theatre not for the mere enjoyment of the play but to examine the technique displayed there. A play produced by a recognised great producer is worth many visits for the purpose of studying particular details of it—the scene and decoration, the lighting, the acting, the movement and tone of the play. Any play, however, will teach something, if only what is to be avoided. It is useful to follow a play with a book of the words. Note the cuts, and try to discover why they were made. Note the changes made by the actors in the dialogue, and try to make up your mind which alterations were accidental and careless and which due to deliberate intention.

The producer who wants to become proficient in his art will learn wherever he goes. Life itself as the object of the imagination is the source of all art, and the art of the theatre no less. The men and women one meets in the street, in the train, in the drawing room, in the office, in the inn, at home and abroad give hints, suggestions, ideas of character that the mind can store

up and transform for the stage. The appearances of the people one encounters, the way they move, their expression in pleasure or anger or disappointment are part of the facts to be observed and made use of by the actor, and thus by the producer. Nature in all its aspects is the great master, inspirer and model for the artificial creations of the stage; and the producer who remembers the living world when shut up in the theatre brings into being there the most perfect art. And finally may I say that the powers of the soul itself must be drawn on for the most profound acts of the creative artist; for one gives only what one has.

An amateur company that intends to do regular work, not one or two plays a season, but half a dozen, will need to consider the appointment of a full-time producer. The work cannot otherwise be done. An ideal arrangement for a company in a town of sufficient size for the required audience is one play a month throughout the year, except in summer, with a paid producer. That is probably the maximum of which amateurs are capable. Such a programme would require a hall or theatre of a capacity to get returns that would allow for an adequate salary to be paid. With a good producer who can give his whole time to the work the players can really learn something of their art, they get the opportunity of playing regularly together, and dramatic work of value can be done. Under such conditions those amateurs who are interested in production can themselves learn, and, under the direction of the producer, gain practice in production.

## A CENTRAL BUREAU

There is need both in England and America for something in the nature of a Central Bureau for producers. If there were in each country a centre to which amateur producers could go for advice upon the many matters that arise in connection with the production of a play, it would be found of enormous value. This Bureau should be in a position to call upon the services of experts in costumes, scenery, lighting and stage mechanics, so that they could by correspondence and personal interview be able to advise upon questions on which producers want help. A producer seldom carries through a play without the necessity for consulting with someone able to advise him upon some point or other. At present the average amateur producer has no one to whom to turn for such consultation. Usually it is in the early stages of a production that advice can be of most use. It needs to be made available promptly and be really expert and thorough.

CHAPTER II  
CHOOSING THE PLAY  
THE OBJECT IN VIEW

To know how to choose a play is one of the first secrets of success in the theatre for amateurs no less than for professionals. I cannot profess to be able to disclose that secret; for I do not know it. I can only state certain principles based upon my own experience that may be a guide to others in making their choice.

There are thousands of plays to choose from. There is the vast literature of plays that have got into print, and of which there is some judgment on record. We have doubtless seen a good many plays ourselves and know at first-hand something of their merits. There is also an endless number of unpublished or unperformed plays upon which we can draw. How should we make our choice from this great mass of dramatic material?

We should consider first of all the object we have in view. Why do we want a play? The most obvious answer is, to give pleasure to those who perform it and to the audience that sees it. Some of us may have an educational object in mind; we may want to teach something to the audience or the players. Others may desire to engage in propaganda for some cause. Or we

may wish, without any definite idea before us, just to do good. I am not able to give advice to those who have educational or propagandist aims or who have merely the vague idea of providing something for the good of other people, except to suggest to them that they should leave plays alone. Plays of course can be educational; a good play will teach much to both actors and audience, and plays may convey ideas. But I do not think that plays ought to be chosen to produce other effects than those that any work of art exists to produce, namely to quicken the imagination, delight the senses, and arouse the intelligence. "Plays are for pleasure."

#### THE FOUR RULES

##### (a) *Pleasing Oneself*

When I am choosing a play for production I look for one that pleases me; that I think will please the players; that I expect to please the audience, and that is practicable. These four rules, though quite simple, will, I believe, never lead one astray. The producer should look for a play that he likes because it is hopeless to expect to do any good with a play that one does not care for. Producing a play is a great effort, demanding concentrated attention, energy and patience. What a producer has of these qualities can hardly be advantageously expended upon something that, however good, does not interest him. I suggest, therefore, to committees, that they should not attempt to select a play without consulting and getting the agreement of

whomsoever they may have as a producer, and that they should hesitate to persuade their producer to undertake a play that he does not like.

(b) *Pleasing the Players*

But to find a play that the producer or the committee, or both, like, is not sufficient. The players have to be considered. The play must be one that they will work upon with enthusiasm. Amateur players have this much in their favour, at least, that they need not play unless they wish. They play for the love of it; so that the play chosen must be one to please them. I hate to feel that a player dislikes a play he is taking part in, and I would never knowingly let him work under such conditions.

(c) *Pleasing the Audience*

The audience must also be remembered. The aim of all the weeks of work put into a play is to please the audience. If they are not pleased, the players may have had some enjoyment, but their enjoyment will not be complete unless the audience shares in it too. We must consider therefore what the audience will like. This does not mean that we should be afraid of our audiences, and never risk anything new or difficult. The public is a bad master. It is the duty of those who practise any of the arts to create public taste, to lead and direct it rather than to serve it.

Audiences, of course, are not all alike. A village



audience is not the same as a town audience. The audience in one town may be different from an audience in another. A dramatic group may have its own special audience, or it may appeal to the public at large. The point is that in choosing plays we must remember that we have a duty to the audience to which we shall present them. We must, in short, deserve their support.

(d) *Practical Questions*

We have to consider what is practicable. We must ask ourselves what is within the scope of our players' abilities. It is not good to ask them to do what is entirely beyond their powers. Also, have we a cast for the particular play?

I have seen many plays performed by amateurs that should never have been attempted, because it was obvious that they could not cast them. No play should ever be selected without a cast in mind. To choose a play and then to attempt to fit the players to it is a hopeless business. It does not matter how good the play is, or how much the audience would enjoy it, if the principal characters cannot be cast it should be left alone.

In selecting a play the cost has to be counted. Will the expenditure upon costumes, scenery and author's fee, as well as all the other usual expenses, be within the amount of possible receipts? A fuller discussion of these financial matters may be left to a separate chapter.

## CHOOSING GOOD OR BAD PLAYS?

I have heard it said that certain classes of plays should not be chosen by amateurs. I think that statement needs qualification. There is no reason why any play of merit should not be produced by amateurs, provided that the capabilities of the players are equal to it. A play that can be done by one company may not be suitable for another for a number of reasons. Any play chosen should be appropriate to the players, the audience, and the facilities available. Village players should not attempt Oscar Wilde, for they cannot represent artificial comedy of manners. Chesterton's *Magic* would not be intelligible to an unsophisticated audience, *Milestones* should not be attempted unless the proper costumes and settings can be got. And so on.

The only plays that should definitely be excluded from the programmes of amateurs are the worthless plays. To put a play on the stage demands a lot of time and effort, and a certain amount of money; why should they be expended upon work of no consequence? Mr. Sean O'Casey said in a broadcast talk some time ago, that it was better for amateurs to do good plays badly than bad plays well. That is a rather unfortunate remark for a dramatist to broadcast to the world. No service surely is done to the theatre by amateurs doing good plays badly. Players who can only play badly should be urged to confine their attention to bad plays, for injury is done to a good play when it is badly put on. I often wonder what idea people can

have of the work of Bernard Shaw or John Galsworthy, who have only seen it distorted, misrepresented and made commonplace by earnest incapable amateurs.

Any company, however, that can do a bad play well can do a good play well, and it is clearly not getting as much out of its work or doing justice to its audience by not improving its choice of play.

Many plays that succeed in the theatre depend entirely upon the personalities of the leading players; they have no intrinsic interest. Those plays should be let alone. Too often plays are selected because someone has seen himself in a part that some popular actor is presenting nightly to applauding audiences. He thinks he could do the same himself. It seems the height of earthly ambition to be as Miss Gladys Cooper, or Miss Tallulah Bankhead, or Sir Gerald du Maurier. But players with such aims are merely feeding their own vanity. If a member of your company earnestly recommends a play that he or she saw recently, you should place that play at the very top of the list of plays you do not intend to choose. Plays that depend wholly upon personality are not for amateurs, because few amateurs, even though they have personality, have sufficient technique to exploit it successfully. Many times people have said to me, "You ought to do such and such a play that I saw last week. There is a splendid part for so and so and a beautiful part for you." They do not know that they have suggested a play to me that, without knowing anything more about it, I shall almost for certain take very great care to avoid. These "plays for actors" have usually thin, even com-

monplace dialogue, with no literary merit. They offer outlines of parts for the actors to fill in.

The kind of plays most suitable for amateurs are those in which the characters are clearly drawn and in which the playing does not depend mainly upon temperament.

I place the different classes of plays in the following order of difficulty:

- Comedy, the hardest.
- Tragedy, almost as difficult.
- Romantic plays, much easier.
- Farce, easier still.
- Naturalistic plays, easiest of all.

#### (a) *Comedy*

Most comedies, with light, witty, epigrammatic dialogue, are the most difficult of all plays for amateurs to attempt to do. Comedy needs personality and knowledge of the stage. It looks easy; it has to look easy; but it requires that the actor should have complete command of himself and his resources as an artist. It shows up all faults: and crudeness, slovenliness and incompetence are set in a glaring light. The plays of A. A. Milne and Noel Coward are in this category.

It is important to remember that personality is important in all comedy. Even in Shakespearean comedy, where the characters are fully expressed in the words of the plays, personality counts for much. On the professional stage it is rare to find Shakespeare's heroines satisfactorily played in spite of the help of the match-

less verse. These parts make tremendous demands upon players. Many amateurs consider Bernard Shaw's plays to be easy, but all of his plays need personality for really good results. His dialogue, which is possibly the most perfect stage dialogue ever written, almost speaks itself, and players sometimes think they have been successful in a Shaw play when it has amused the audience, when what has really happened is that the audience has got pleasure out of the dialogue in spite of the actor. I suggest there is no exception to the rule that all comedy depends on personality.

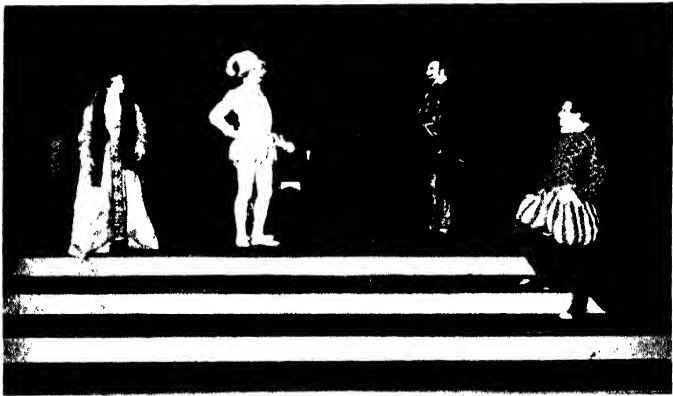
### (b) *Tragedy*

Tragedy requires sure touch in the players and ability to create atmosphere, and the action must be sustained without the slightest faltering right up to the climax. The plays themselves usually have more substance than is possessed by comedies, and this makes them easier, for the words can bear more; but unless the most careful production can be given and the players depended upon, tragedy should not be chosen. Most tragedy needs a good deal of power in voice and physique, and players who have this are necessary.

### (c) *Romance*

Romantic plays are among the best plays for amateurs, and it is a pity that there are so few of them. *The Fantasticks*, by Edmond Rostand is a good example. They need to be played with spirit and without realism. Fantastic, symbolic and religious plays may





DON JUAN IN HELL. By Bernard Shaw  
The Welwyn Garden City Theatre Society (1926)  
*Produced by C. B. Purdom*



CASTE. By T. W. Robertson  
The Welwyn Garden City Theatre Society (1924)  
*Produced by C. B. Purdom*

be placed in the same class. Technical deficiencies are not so noticeable in these plays, and usually a tolerable effect can be secured with a minimum of means. They are remote from real life, and audiences will accept whatever is kept within the convention in which they are presented.

(d) *Farce*

Farce is easy, because it depends entirely upon construction and situation. This also is remote from real life. It needs, however, brisk, sharp, clear playing and smart production.

(e) *Naturalism*

The easiest plays of all, and those most commonly done by amateurs, especially those companies that try to do the better plays, are naturalistic, dealing with ordinary people in common life. These plays may be comedies or tragedies, more often the latter. They are frequently in dialect. They represent people familiar or nearly familiar to the players. Harold Brighouse, Gilbert Cannan, Harold Chapin, Gertrude Jennings, St. John Ervine, John Galsworthy, Stanley Houghton, Charles McEvoy, Eugene O'Neill are among the writers of this class of play. They are usually simple to stage and to cast. They are so simple that it is frequently supposed that no technique whatever is necessary to do them. Yet they can be badly done and I am afraid usually are. There is, however, far less excuse for indifferent work in them than in other plays.



I think it is right that amateurs should do these plays. They are handling what they know and can bring all their knowledge to bear upon their work. Often amateurs can stage plays of this sort better than professionals, because they are nearer the source. There is an abundance of character parts in them, and these are the easiest parts to play.

### PLAYS IN VERSE

Plays in verse may be found in each of the above categories. They present special difficulties, for they depend primarily upon good speaking. As a general statement it may be said that they are suitable plays for amateurs to work upon. For their perfect representation they demand, undoubtedly, much stage technique as well as good diction; but at the same time, the quality of the dialogue is such that amateurs can usually do something with them. That is why amateurs seldom go wrong in attempting the plays of Shakespeare, or the Greek dramatists, or even modern poetical dramatists, such as Masefield or Lascelles Abercrombie. A great deal is undoubtedly to be learned about literature, the speaking of verse, and the stage, from these plays. Experience in doing them is useful for all other stage work.

Another advantage that they have is that they usually provide opportunities for large numbers of players, and have many quite small parts. This is often useful to companies with many members who want to take a share in productions. They also offer plenty of scope

for those who wish to help in the making of costumes and properties.

### ORIGINAL PLAYS

In choosing plays, avoid what is hackneyed. Do not look up the programmes of other amateur companies and follow their lead. If a play is being revived on the professional stage avoid it for the time being. Aim at doing fresh and original work. For that reason get hold of original plays when you can.

Amateur companies ought to spend much more time in searching for original plays than they do. An original play, even if it is not quite so good as a well-known play that you could do, should be chosen in preference to it. By doing original work amateurs can contribute something original to the theatre in playing, staging, and in the plays themselves.

There is this that has to be said, however, in this connection. If it is important to do a good well-known play as well as you can, it is of much greater importance to do a new play well. Some companies seem to think that they need not take too much trouble over an original play; but that is unfair to the playwright. An original work may be damned by being mishandled by amateurs. I know playwrights who would never dream of allowing the first productions of their plays to be in the hands of amateurs; and I feel they are right. When original plays are given to you to do, the most conscientious work should be devoted to them by all concerned. It should be regarded as an honour

to have the opportunity of presenting plays for the first time, and the work should be done with scrupulous care.

It is not an easy matter to choose an original play, and something must be said upon how it should be done. The great majority of plays that are written are worthless. Out of a hundred manuscripts there will hardly be one worthy of consideration. How is that one to be selected? Literary merit, it must be remembered, is not the same thing as theatrical merit. A play may read well and be ineffective on the stage. It is necessary for the play-reader to visualise the play in action; he must see it objectively, follow the movement, grasp the situations, and hear the dialogue as it may be spoken. He must not be put off by a certain stiffness or even dullness in the words, or, on the other hand, be deceived by their superficial smoothness and wit. What he has to look for above everything is character and situation. Also the play must have suspense, it must arouse expectation, in other words have a well-devised plot. Many people seem able to write passable dialogue; but the characters they present are uninteresting, they do nothing that is worth seeing and the play comes to no conclusion that is worth knowing about. A good play must have definite characters in some interesting relation to each other, it must keep the audience in suspense and it must come to a conclusion that gives pleasure.

It is a good test of a play to read it over aloud twice; once is not enough. If it is good at a second reading it is worth serious attention.



PRUNELLA By Laurence Housmann and Granville-Barker  
The Oxted and Lumpsheld Players

*Produced by Muriel E. Whitmore*



THE CROWN OF ST. FÉLICE By F. Sladen-Smith  
The Oxted and Lumpsheld Players

*Produced by Muriel E. Whitmore*



## ONE-ACT PLAYS

In making up a programme, it should be remembered that one-act plays are easier to do than full-length plays. Three or four one-act plays require much less effort than one three- or four-act play. When putting on a series of one-act plays, study the make-up of the programme carefully and get variety and contrast. Do not put on two plays by the same author, because with such a programme contrast is an important element in success; but it is possible to devote the whole programme to the work of one author and be successful with it, if the interest can be concentrated upon that author. Study the order in which the plays are to be given and put the most cheerful one at the end. It is worth noting, however, that a programme of short plays is rarely as much liked by audiences as a full-length play.

## LISTS OF PLAYS

There are several good lists of plays in existence: *The Players Guide: A Catalogue of Plays in the Library of the British Drama League*, compiled by Mary Dalston. This list describes the plots, scenes, costumes, number of characters, etc. *Plays for Amateurs: A Selected List*, by S. Marion Tucker. Published in New York by the H. Wilson Company. *The Guide to Selecting Plays* edited by Wentworth Hogg and issued by Samuel French in London and New York is now a very useful list. It contains particulars of the plays for which the firm act as agents, and describes

the plot, gives details of the number of characters, acts and scenes, costumes, time in representation, and fees for performance. Many publishers in England and America issue lists of plays published by them, and will forward particulars of new plays as they are issued. The Incorporated Society of Authors, London, issues a list including plays in Manuscript. And there are the lists issued by Joseph Williams and other agencies.

Comprehensive, up-to-date lists of plays, giving a brief description of the plot and other information, are of great value, and the Central Bureau for producers suggested at the end of the previous chapter could do no better work than to compile such lists, with notes and suggestions for producers and others who have the duty of choosing plays for performance.

#### A SUMMARY

The following is a summary of this chapter. In choosing plays consider the object you should have in view, the delight of the audience. Choose a play that you like, that the players will like, that the audience will enjoy. Choose a play that is within the capabilities of your players, that you can cast, that you have the facilities to produce. Do not be afraid to break fresh ground. Choose original plays when you can do them well. Do not decide upon the first play that comes into your head or that is suggested to you. Remember that choosing a play is a difficult business and that a well-chosen play is half way to success. When you have made your choice, spare no effort to do justice to the work you have chosen.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ACTOR

#### THE ACTOR'S PERSONALITY

The actor must work in the theatre as a lover of the art. The conventional "amateur" is content to do things badly, does not expect, indeed, to do anything else; but no real lover of art will be satisfied short of perfect expression. Therefore the amateur actor must work to get as near perfection as he can. To come before an audience with self-confidence is not acting, though many amateurs seem to think that if they get rid of fear they have achieved everything. To be as one of the audience who has happened to get on the stage is not acting, for the actor must be separated from the audience and be subject to a world of his own. That is not to say that to be "theatrical" in the bad sense of the word is to act. To be "theatrical" is to imitate, to be false, to lack reality: that is the bad sense of the word; its good sense is to "belong to the theatre." In that sense the actor must be theatrical when he appears on the stage, not a man just like the rest of us; but a man who increases the significance of mankind, of what men are and do.

An actor must have personality. He may be ugly,



deformed, ignorant, with every possible physical and mental drawback; but so long as he has personality and the skill to exploit it he has the first qualification for the stage. Almost every kind of handicap can be overcome except lack of personality, so that no one should think of acting who does not possess this natural gift.

What personality is has not been defined, yet we recognise it at once when we are brought into contact with it. It is not any particular quality, but the effect of the sum total of qualities that a man, or woman, possesses. It may be said to be an overflow of the soul. Most of us are bound up, held down, imprisoned within ourselves; we are, in a word, repressed; but the exceptional man is free. An actor uses this freedom in expending himself for his audience. It is because of this that he delights us so. We see someone whose emotions and vital powers are not repressed as ours are, but are freely exercised. The great actor, like the orator, exercises through this outpouring of personality a mesmeric power over his audience, until they see and feel as he makes them. All actors employ this power to the extent that they are successful.

At one time, being greatly inexperienced, I thought that the most important thing to remember in the use of personality was to keep it well controlled. That led to underplaying, or to such subtlety of playing that all effect was lost. This is a common defect in amateurs, even among those who have plenty of personality. It is true enough that control is necessary, that is to say personality must be directed to the required result, not

perverted; but it must be employed to the full, not stinted, and must impress the audience with its abundance. The actor must truly overflow with personality and let the audience feel its power.

At the same time economy must be observed. No more effort should be used, there should be no greater expenditure of energy, than is necessary to accomplish any particular action. The actor must not be a spendthrift of his nervous powers. To use exactly the amount of effort that a part requires, and no more, is to work under the proper discipline of the artist.

#### WOMEN ON THE STAGE

One of the objections to women on the stage is, I suppose, if I may be pardoned the digression, that it is regarded as unpleasant to see a woman exploiting her personality for public approbation, as she must if she is an actor. An actor gives himself away to the public; he reveals himself, not as he likes to be considered but as he is, letting the audience see into some of the secrets of his nature, or if you please, into human nature in him. Women actors must do this too, and can, as experience shows, do it successfully; for women in daily life are accomplished natural exploiters of their personalities. Yet there is an objection, or has been in the past, on the part of some men themselves rather than of women, to witnessing the unfolding of human nature in the female on the stage. It is interesting in this connection to observe the effect of the exhibition in the theatre in most countries of the nude

female body. I suppose there is nothing more unattractive, more boring, more contemptible than this. And the woman actor has struck some men and women, too, as almost as unpleasing. I do not intend to pursue this controversy here. The negative position, indeed, no matter how well held, cannot be maintained in the present times without calling down the wrath of the whole world upon one's head. But the point is, perhaps, worthy of mention because the holding up of the actor's personality for exhibition, for the purpose of playing on the emotions and senses of the audience, is the very essence of the actor's art. There is no doubt that women do it well. There is no question, either, of the charm of the woman actor on and off the stage. Perhaps one had better leave it there. This much may be said in resuming the main theme of this chapter, that the best amateur actors are usually women; it is certainly far easier to get good women players than men.

#### THE ACTOR AND HIS PART

To interpret a part the actor has to use his own experience. He studies the character from the words given him by the author and the situations and actions that the play provides. He then interprets the character through the material of his experience. It is experience, however, made alive by imagination. The actor does not need to have been a thief or a hero, to be able to play a Hamlet or a Lear. He needs the imaginative activity to visualise the particular emotions expressed in the characters at the moment they are shown





THE SHOWING-UP OF BLANCO POSNET — By Bernard Shaw

The Letchworth Players (1910)

*Produced by C. B. Purdom*



MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. Act III, Sc. 4

The Letchworth Players (1911)

*Produced by C. B. Purdom*

on the stage, and the experience of life, of himself, to convey those emotions to the audience through voice or gesture. The highest form of acting is not mimicry. It is "making," it is, in short, what is definitely meant by art. The actor does not imitate nature, he expresses and translates it, he makes it more vivid, more alive, more full of meaning than it is to the audience without him.

The question is often discussed: Does the actor feel the emotion he has to express in the part he portrays? It is the question that has exercised many minds and aroused more controversy than any other in connection with the actor's art. What does the question mean but this: Must the actor be the person he is playing? Surely it can admit of but one answer. If the actor really is the man, where is the art? The actor is not expressing his personal feeling but his imaginative conception of an emotion. Does the poet personally experience all that he puts into his poem? Does the novelist live the lives of those people whom he puts on record in his books? The questions have only to be asked for their absurdity to be evident.

"The proper study" of the actor is men. He must, as I have already said, know how they act, how they express emotion in all its infinite variety of form. He must have a store of memories to enrich his mind and contribute to the detail and veracity of his impersonations. Ah! that word raises one more question. Does the actor impersonate or interpret character? He may do either. To impersonate is to impose upon one's own character that of another; to interpret is to use one's

own personality to convey the essential personality of another. There is a difference, which surely goes to the root of the very matter we have been discussing. There is a form of acting that is sheer mimicry, a copy or caricature of character. That undoubtedly is an elementary kind of playing. It is useful to the actor for practice and fun; but he must transcend it unless his work is to remain shallow and insignificant. Creativeness in the actor is not to make a character by mere imitation, or to express by memory the photographic reproduction of character, however well observed and skilfully put together, but to create a living soul by sympathetic intuition. The impersonation of character is allied to mimicry. The artist on the other hand, transfigures his material and lets the soul of his part shine through.

### THE AMATEUR MUST WORK

The amateur can afford to be an artist because he has not to think about getting a living from his art. I say he can "afford" to be; but he seldom is. It seems strange that when free from economic necessity men will not work. Yet that is so with all but the most exceptional men. And only work can make an artist. "How not to be a genius," declared James Huneker, the American critic. "The answer is as easy as lying—never work!"<sup>1</sup> The desire to act is necessary to the actor, but it is not the end of the matter, as too many fondly suppose. Nothing but practice, practice, practice will make a man into an artist.

<sup>1</sup> Variations (p. 19).

The vice of the bad amateur actor is trying to get his results by the easiest means. He attempts only too often to carry off a part by sheer impudence. The comedian gets the laugh in the easiest way and is satisfied. He will not study; but prefers instead, for instance, to witness the play done elsewhere and then imitate the player he has seen. Failing that he will imitate an actor in what he regards as a similar part, or he will perform the various tricks that he knows from experience will bring the laughs of the audience. He will come to rehearsal after rehearsal with the smiling confession that he has not looked at his part since the last time. It is because of that that most amateur acting is of no account. Only work, I repeat, can make an actor.

Let me quote the late Mr. Huneker again:

Genius is a word that has fallen into disrepute because of its being bandied about so freely by our makers of fiction. That burlesque of a raw-head-and-bloody-bones, Strickland, the alleged painter in Somerset Maugham's melodramatic "shocker," "The Moon and Sixpence," is a case in point. The clever author expects his readers to believe that a staid business man is transformed into a great painter at the age of forty. To be sure, Strickland was what the French call a "Sunday painter," one who potters with colour tubes and canvas every seventh day, yet is supposed to accomplish what such men of genius as Degas, Manet, Millet, couldn't in protracted daily toil. And the innocent public swallows such fairy-tales because it believes in miracles. You may be sure of one thing—no one in the history of the Seven Arts has mastered his material save in the sweat of his brow.

I invite amateur actors to examine that paragraph and lay it to heart. There is much good material among



amateurs. There is no reason, provided they will work for it, why many men and women who like playing for the love of it should not be thoroughly good actors. It can be done. In his book *The Exemplary Theatre*, Mr. Granville-Barker says, "There is no reason why a man should not be a first-rate actor and give equally serious attention to other work. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Indeed, if a man can work on the stage and also work in some other occupation he will undoubtedly be a better all round man. The actor's life is restricted too much to his own personality, so that to take his mind off that for some hours of the day by another employment would be an advantage to him. Thus the amateur actor, who gives but the smaller part of his time to this art, might be a good type of actor, if he were to endeavour to become competent, instead of being as he so often is now, a well-nigh useless fellow.

#### THE STUDY OF A PART

When a player has a part given to him he should first of all read the play through until he gets a thorough grasp of it. He should understand the relation of his own part to the other characters and to the play as a whole. No matter whether the part be a leading one or a minor one, that should be done. He should make it his next duty to memorise his words. Some players find this an easy matter: they can read a part through a few times and know it. Others have to memorise it word by word. Light or difficult, the

<sup>2</sup> *The Exemplary Theatre*, p. 163.

task should be faced and done. The words should be learned completely and accurately, that is what is meant by being "word perfect." Nothing less than that should satisfy the conscientious actor. It is not sufficient to get a general idea of the words and to invent the rest.

Looking at a part is something more than looking at the words. It means looking at it until it becomes alive within one's mind, so that every detail, every breath and movement, every intonation and gesture is seen and felt clearly and vividly. It is useless to improvise, for that is to leave yourself to chance. No matter how much is known about a part it will be found that there is always something more to learn about it. A great actor broods over his part with intense concentration of imagination. He lets it possess his mind completely. He searches every secret place of the mind that he is to interpret, so that when he speaks it is not to give a mere repetition of a script but the words of a living being.

The actor is one in whom the image in the mind becomes translated into speech and gesture. The mind dramatises itself in him. This is not a reasoning process but a creative effort.

Acting can be studied and its rules laid down like the rules of any other art, and an actor should be trained—that is to say, he should know the rules. Training means practice in the rules. Acting cannot be learned from books, any more than can any other art.

It is part of the actor's technique to understand the mechanism and control of the body, for the body is the material of his art. He must be able to control his

expression, movement, gesture and the muscles of his whole body. The whole of his physical frame should be sensitive and flexible. His body, in Walter Pater's words, should be "like some perfect musical instrument, perfectly responsive to the intention, to the lightest touch. . . ." <sup>3</sup>

The words should be studied with gesture and expression. It is useful to say them before a full-length mirror, noting every slightest movement as one does it. The actor should have the power of suggesting the whole man by a glance or a gesture, maintaining and enforcing the character by the magnetic force of personality. Gesture, movement, action express the actor. The use of head, hands, arms and legs, the actions of standing, walking, sitting, the expression of the features, eyes, mouth, and forehead, can convey every kind of feeling without words. Incomplete or faulty gesture and movement can ruin a part. "When an actor makes a wrong gesture," said Mr. Theodore Komisarjevsky, "he prevents the right emotion being born."

It is hard for amateurs to keep a high artistic quality in their work because they do not play enough. They get insufficient practice. Few amateurs play more than three or four parts a year, and each one from two to half a dozen times; the majority do less than half this. Also they play for various producers, who have different methods, perhaps different ways of indicating want of method. They tend therefore to be thrown on their own resources, to play for themselves, and to cultivate mannerisms. In this way they are apt to de-

<sup>3</sup> *Plato and Platonism*, p. 63.

generate the more they play, because they take always the line of least resistance and at last are uninteresting even to their best friends. Mannerisms are cultivated because they have been found to carry the player through a part. They consist of ways of winning the sympathy, attention or applause of the audience. They are a refuge from the embarrassment arising from lack of technique. The actor should beware of them like a disease.

Naturalistic plays are responsible for much indifferent acting, for there is a tendency to slipshod careless work when playing the parts of slipshod careless people. But naturalistic playing should be done with as much care and discrimination, with as much concentration of imagination as any other style of playing. It is not necessary to be natural to convey the idea of a natural man. Every movement should be carefully studied and deliberately performed. Naturalistic playing gives the opportunity for simplification, and this should be taken. That means doing the part with the greatest economy of movement and gesture and without exaggeration. To play the part of a man or woman of the present day in a setting familiar to the actor and the audience should call for the most complete attention and accomplishment.

#### THE DAMNING FAULT OF EGOTISM, AND THE IDEAL SPECTATOR

A tendency of amateur players after a little experience of the stage is to develop excessive egotism.

Success upon the stage has the effect of stimulating personal vanity. Even those who are capable of knowing better are often influenced by applause, so that their judgment is disturbed. Hence arise frequent quarrels and jealousies among companies of players.

It has to be remembered that actors, including amateur actors, are temperamental, that is, are nervous and highly strung. Success and the appreciative applause of others have the effect of exaggerating this. Actors should be aware of it and endeavour to counteract it. The successful amateur comedian often receives great applause. It is not surprising that he frequently becomes self-opinionated, and forgets that he knows very little. He is found to take less and less trouble with his stage work. He plays when he chooses and refuses when he thinks fit. In the end, of course, nobody can stand him, and a promising actor is lost.

A good director of a company can do much to check these unfortunate happenings. He should encourage his players to play not for the applause of their friends but for an ideal spectator. He should give them the conception of an ideal audience whose criticism can be detected in their own artistic consciences. Indeed, to arouse and cultivate this artistic conscience so that the actor can become his own severest judge is a producer's main task in relation to the actor. The actor has no concern with the audience. His concern is with his part, with the play as a whole. On the stage he should not think of the audience, how he can interest them or gain their applause; but his whole mind should be upon his work, the character that he is bringing to

life, and in that the whole of his mind should be absorbed.

I have had occasion to call players together after a performance to find fault with their playing. I have been told that they cannot understand how they can be thought to be playing badly when they receive such constant applause. It is one's business then to awaken the consciences of the players and to get them to see the play from the ideal point of view. Most players will respond to this if the producer has their confidence.

#### THE ACTOR AND THE AUTHOR'S MEANING

An actor must conceive his part in the terms of the play. He must follow his author. He must not conceive it in his own terms. The first law of acting is to play the part. And a "part" belongs to a whole, so that the actor must play for the play.

Some parts are slightly conceived by the author and demand what may be called "improvisation" by the actor. This requires highly developed technical skill. The great plays, however, are those in which the parts are fully developed. Exhibitions of technical skill as such, that is, a theatre in which the actor is supreme is a barren theatre. The actor must have the material of the dramatist on which to work.

To what extent can an actor convey what was in the author's mind? That is a question often discussed. But is it an actor's business to do that? I think not. The actor is only concerned with the thing created by the

author; to understand it and to re-create it in the terms of his own art. He is not concerned with what was in the author's mind. Do authors always know what they have created? It is well known that what an author produces often surprises himself. Therefore, the actor has no concern with the author, but with the play.

### THE POWER OF SPEECH

What practical suggestions can I give to the actor? I shall touch upon this in some detail in the course of the next chapter on rehearsing. Here I have dealt with the spirit in which the amateur actor, no less than the professional, should approach his work. The one practical suggestion that I offer in conclusion is the following.

Speech to the actor is half his art. He must at least be heard and his words clearly enunciated. He must have what Blake calls "the strength, endurance, and power of the ancient lungs." The actor must have "power" of speech. Few people have such "power," or having it, can use it, without training; so that would-be actors must, if they are to be proficient, at least study voice production. That is not the same thing as what used to be called elocution, and no one is urged here to waste time in that dismal occupation. Voice production, that is the right use of the vocal organs and the control of the breath, is essential to really good speech. Without it no one can employ the variety and range of tone of his voice, or use his voice with due economy. The effect of breathing in express-

ing emotion must be understood. Tears, laughter, anger, hatred, are matters of control of the breath. But these cannot be taught in a book, though there are books that set out to do it. The learner must go to a master.

Mr. Lewis Casson, in an article on "The Problem of Shakespearean Acting" complains that it is extremely hard to find actors who have enough vocal skill to make Shakespeare interesting without a vast amount of coaching (he is, of course, speaking of professional actors). He says:

A large number of actors cannot reproduce *and make their own* a suggested intonation of even six words (though suggesting an intonation is only suggesting a thought) and many modern actors never use a compass of more than half an octave. To make a long, balanced Shakespearean sentence sound simple and sincere, one often has to use a compass of at least two octaves, and carry in one's head a melodic intonation as long as the Preislid, filled from end to end with harmonic intonations and fine shades of tone quality, emphasis and phrasing. How are we going to get this from actors who spend their days and nights clipping and mumbling their speech, who never hear fine speaking and never sing?

To practice the speaking of Shakespearean dialogue under the direction of a skilled teacher is the best training that an actor can have. But it must be speech for the stage, not for recitation, that is to say speech in character, in which the whole force of personality is employed and transformed. In addition, the speaking of verse, not short lyrical poems, but narrative, dramatic and epic verse, is good exercise. And the learn-



ing of declamatory and rhetorical passages from literature and the speaking of them within a wide range of tone is good too.

The gramophone may be used with great advantage in learning how to speak well. Until recently there were few good gramophone records of speech; but there are now a number. One of the best is a Parlophone record (E. 5967) by Mr. Basil Maine, which contains John o' Gaunt's speech from Shakespeare's *Richard II*, "Methinks I am a prophet new inspired," on one side, and the "Dagger" speech from *Macbeth* on the other. The speaking of this actor is deserving of close attention; the first speech is said, I think, without fault, and the few faults in the second speech are worth noting. A record issued by the Linguaphone Institute (S.H., 1E.[M]) of a speech by Mr. Bernard Shaw on the subject of "Spoken English and Broken English," is worth having. Mr. Shaw has one of the finest speaking voices of any man alive, with remarkably clear articulation, and considerable variety in pace and tone. His voice is the most pleasant of voices.

It is interesting to study plays broadcast by wireless as everything depends upon the speaking of the dialogue. This should whenever possible be done with the book of words. The values of clear speaking, variation in pace and force, and balanced rhythm can be appreciated, and careful observation of the methods of those players (very few unfortunately) whose broadcasting is satisfactory is worth while.

## THE ACTOR'S TECHNIQUE

The actor's technique in its simplest terms is the ability to stand, walk, sit and talk upon the stage, in short to make himself seen and heard, just as the playwright's technique is to write, to relate a story and to invent dialogue. This is not the end of the matter, as so many actors and writers appear to think, judging from the work offered to the public: it is merely the beginning. Even perfection in technique, the possession let us say of actual technical virtuosity, which is what always distinguishes the professional from the amateur, is not the whole art of acting any more than it is of writing. Hard, fundamental thinking, the active employment of the imagination, the passionate projection of the whole personality of the actor into the part he has to do, alone make acting or the play worth while. These are as open to the amateur as to the professional, and when the amateur realises this fully in his playing imperfection of technique can be forgotten because it will be transcended.

## CHAPTER IV

### REHEARSING

#### CASTING

When the play has been chosen the cast has to be selected. The success of any production largely depends on right casting so that enormous care should be taken with it. The producer should be given the opportunity of reading the play through working out the action and studying each character before it is cast. When a producer works regularly with a company he should have a voice in the selection of the cast and the final word. As I have already explained, it is a mistake to choose a play unless there is at least a skeleton cast in mind; for much time may be given to deciding on a play and securing it for production when it may be found impossible to cast it.

The producer ought to know something about each member of a cast before he begins. He should be satisfied that he has a cast that is likely to do justice to the play. Of course, the ideal cast is never found, and it is hopeless to look for it; but it seems the right way of casting a play to get as near to it as possible. The members of a cast must balance one another. They must be chosen in relation to one another. Their relative

heights, physical characteristics, voices and personalities need to be considered. Unless it is possible to get together a reasonably good cast, rehearsals should not be started, and the play should be abandoned.

It should be remembered that an actor, however versatile, cannot play any part. He may be physically unsuited to a particular part; his height, size, or voice may be wrong; his personality may be unsympathetic.

Sometimes it is useful to cast to type, that is to cast a player for a part that is somewhat like him in manner or personal characteristics. But this should not be done if it can be avoided, for those who can act should be given a chance. A player should be fitted to his part—but as an actor, not as an individual.

Readings of plays are often used for the purpose of selecting a cast; but this must be done with great caution. A producer should be careful of first impressions. People who can read a part well frequently cannot do anything else; they do not develop. In my experience, many good amateur players have been bad readers; they are entirely at sea until they have had time to study the part in the play.

#### UNDERSTUDIES

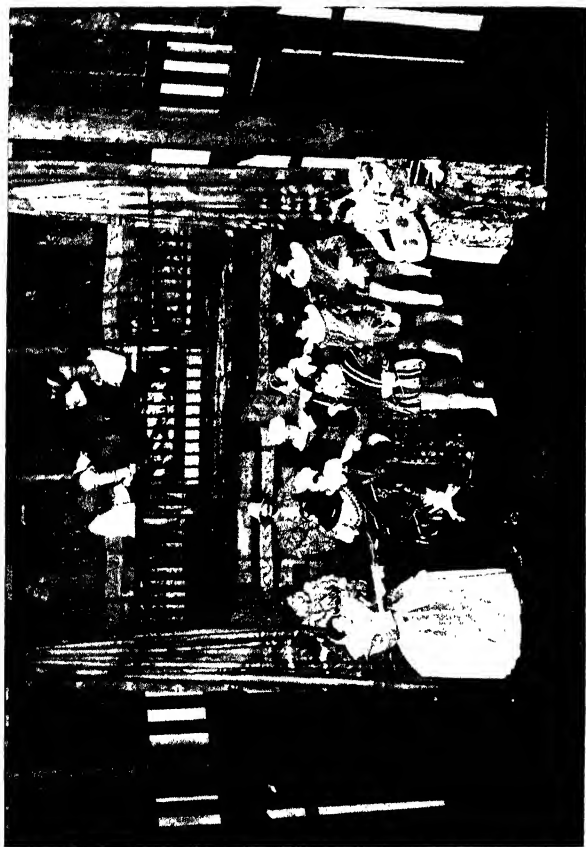
Understudies, if they are to be used, should be selected at the same time as the cast. They should be carefully chosen. It is possible to play without them; but the risks are great. Understudies should learn their parts and attend rehearsals regularly. There should be second choices, at least, for all parts, even if under-

studies are not employed; for it sometimes happens that one or more of the players may find it necessary for one reason or another to give up their parts after rehearsals have started; and to look for a substitute at short notice is often very troublesome.

### THE PRODUCER'S COPY

Before rehearsals start, the producer must think out the whole play. He must work out the complete performance in his mind with the actors he has available. He must be satisfied that this imaginary performance is a good one before he proceeds further. The play must then be prepared in detail and everything set down on paper. Mr. Bernard Shaw has described this process as well as it can be done:

If before you begin rehearsing you sit down to the manuscript of your play and work out all the stage business, so that you know where every speech is to be spoken as well as what it is to convey, and where the chairs are to be and where they are to be taken to, and where the actors are to put their hats or anything else they may have to take in their hands in the course of the play, and when they are to rise and when they are to sit, and if you arrange all this so as to get the maximum of effect out of every word, and thus make the actors feel that they are speaking at the utmost possible advantage—or at most that they cannot improve on your business, however little they may like it—and if you take care that they never distract attention from one another; that when they speak confidentially they are close to one another; that when they call to one another they are at a due distance; and that when the audience is looking at one side of the stage and somebody cuts in on the other, some trick (which you must contrive) calls the attention of the audience to the new point of view or hearing, etc., then you will at the first rehearsal get



THE TAMING OF THE SHREW  
The Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich

*Produced by Nugent Monck*



a command of the production that nothing will shake afterwards. There will be no time wasted in fumbling for positions, and trying back and disputing.

Also the scenes must be planned, the positions of all the necessary furniture, doors, windows, etc., settled and rough designs made. Then a list of all the properties must be drawn up. Then a lighting plot prepared. I never use diagrams or models, or similar things. I once had a model of the stage I worked on made to scale, and used it for working out scenes, but though it was a pleasant hobby it took far too much time, and I don't think I used it more than twice. Instead, I make rough plans and sketches of the scenes to scale, and find that with a full study of the manuscript this gives me what I want.

The producer should have an interleaved copy of the play on which he should note every stage direction that he gives. This should be brought into use at the first rehearsal. If he neglects to do this he may forget from one rehearsal to another what his instructions have been, and, if he forgets, how can he expect his players to remember? Author's stage directions should be treated with respect; but some authors are over liberal in their instructions to the actor, and the producer must use his discretion. The producer should mark on his copy the positions, business, action, pauses, and the parts of the dialogue to be emphasised. Entrances of the characters should be clearly marked. This may be done by the use of different coloured pencils or inks.

The prompter, or stage manager, should also have an interleaved copy, called the Prompt Book, in which



he should enter all positions, business, entrances, etc. Further reference is made to this matter in the next chapter.

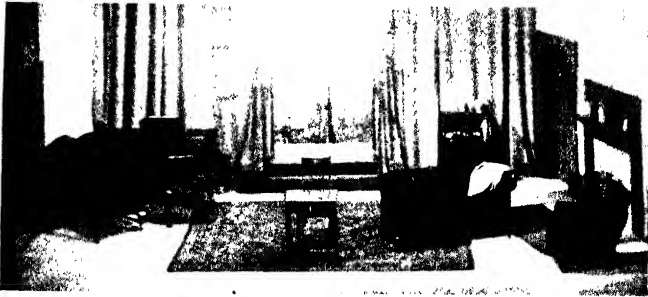
### CUTTING PLAYS

The producer must consider the time the play will take and make any necessary cuts at the start, and get the cuts clearly marked on the actors' script. The question of cutting plays is a vexed one. It is a good rule to avoid it; for the author's work must be respected. But sometimes a play is so long that a certain amount of cutting is necessary. When cutting is done it is better as a rule, to shorten speeches and to cut out parts of scenes without interfering with the action of the play, rather than to cut out whole scenes. I do not recommend cutting, however. In particular I do not care for the cutting of Shakespeare's plays, or for the drastic re-arrangement of scenes that some producers perpetrate. Shakespeare understood the theatre and no one but a second Shakespeare should, I think, meddle with his work. To get a good text of Shakespeare's plays, however, is another matter; and to omit doubtful or unintelligible lines or scenes is sometimes necessary.

### THE FIRST READING

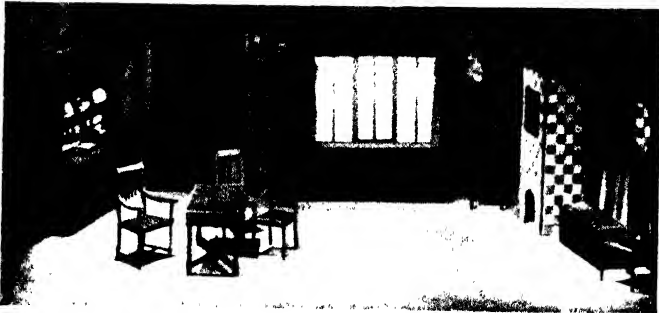
When the cast has been arranged, and the producer has fully worked out the details of the play, he should call the members of the cast together and read the play to them. Alternatively, he can get the players themselves to read their parts aloud. On this occasion the pro-





THE DEATH OF A SAINT — By J. R. Gregson  
The Leeds Civic Playhouse

*Produced by the Author*



SOWING AND REAPING. — A translation from the German by Graham  
and Tristram Rawson  
The Leeds Civic Playhouse

*Produced by Chas. F. Smith*

ducer should talk about the play, and explain his way of working. He should, indeed, at all times be as explanatory as possible. He should encourage the players to discuss the play, and particularly their own parts. He cannot, of course, allow a discussion of his methods or ideas; for though they may be worthy of discussion, that is not the time and place for it. In particular, he cannot let what he purposes to do with the play in hand become matter for debate. If there is not time at the first reading to say all that is necessary of a preliminary and general character, a second call should be made for this special purpose. The producer should do his utmost to let the players know what he has in mind regarding the play generally and about their particular parts; but he must avoid anything in the nature of argument. It is an advantage at this stage to let individual players talk about their own parts; but no player should be permitted to discuss or comment upon any part but his own.

Do not encourage discussion about the way in which the play was done in some other production which any of the players saw. Invite them, if any of them ever saw it before, to forget it. I never encourage players to see the play we are going to do, if by any chance they are able to do so. I have found this to be a mistake. What is liable to happen is that certain actions or incidents, a mannerism of an actor, or a particular piece of business may stick in the mind, and an endeavour will be made to introduce it by the player himself.

At the reading, arrangements should be made for

rehearsals, and the producer should explain how he proposes to conduct them. The dates, time and place of rehearsals should be settled and a programme of work prepared.

The final word at the first reading is to ask the players to learn their words at once. This I believe to be essential. Some producers do not mind words not being learned quickly, and take rehearsal after rehearsal with the players reading from their books; but this involves much waste of time. Other producers are afraid of allowing words to be learnt at too early a stage; for they consider that wrong intonation and other mistakes may be learnt too. I think that is wrong. The words should be learnt as soon as possible, for until then no serious work is done.

### REHEARSALS

At the first rehearsal called after the reading work should be started on the play. It is too much to expect that every player will know his words then, so a little grace should be given. At the first rehearsal begin with the opening of the first act, and go straight through the play. Let the actors speak their lines or read them, and get into positions. Go right through the play at the start, even though it means more than one rehearsal. This is to give the players some idea of the action of the play and where they are in it, and the producer will find it useful too.

When working with amateurs who have other work to do and whose time is not their own, I find it advisable after the first rehearsal to divide the play into

parts to suit their convenience, taking those who appear together even though it means selecting bits from several acts, and rehearsing them together. It is not necessary always to rehearse from the beginning of a play and work straight through it. That is ideal, and to be recommended where it is possible, as it usually is in schools; but it is rarely practicable for amateurs who have only their spare time to devote to playing.

It is a good rule for a producer to make an effort to waste as little of the players' time as possible. There are, of course, at every rehearsal occasions when players are not on the stage, and have to wait their turn. When this occurs encourage them to watch what is taking place, and learn from it.

In rehearsing do not attempt everything at once. Concentrate on the important things and gradually work down to the smaller ones. It will be necessary to give instructions over and over again. It is curious how players forget repeatedly what is said to them. But it must be remembered that until the words are absolutely familiar, it is difficult for players to remember them, how they should be said, and at the same time remember the business they have to do. Also, when players are trying to remember their words, they are usually nervous and easily put out. It is possible to know one's words perfectly in private; but when one comes to say them in rehearsal they are gone, which is irritating, and makes players self-conscious and awkward. The producer should bear this in mind and handle the players gently.

A stage should be used for rehearsals whenever pos-

sible. There is a complete difference between acting on a stage and in a room. But a stage is not always available; in that event the largest room that can be got should be used. It is hard work rehearsing in small rooms. Wherever the rehearsal takes place the producer must remember the dimensions and shape of the scene that is to be used, and get the players to remember them too.

Properties should be brought into use at the start. They sometimes require a great deal of getting used to. Cupboards, doors, fireplaces, cups and saucers, anything that has to be handled, including hats and cloaks, should be available at once so that they may be handled properly from the outset. The opening and closing of doors in modern plays should be rehearsed in detail, for as they form part of the entrances and exits of players they are significant. The moving of properties should be carefully watched so that they may be handled in the right way, and the putting on or off and the places in which to put down clothes need attention.

After the first or second rehearsal it is useful to give each player a written detailed description of the character he has to play and the action. The producer can, of course, prepare this before rehearsals start; but I have found it advisable to wait until I see the particular characteristics of the actor in relation to the part, and then to prepare the notes.

The preparation of these notes for the actor involves a great deal of labour; but it is worth undertaking. It helps the producer to make up his mind, and it makes his instructions definite.

Players should be urged to practice at home what they have rehearsed. It is extraordinary how few amateurs seem to work at their parts from one rehearsal to another. Yet unless hard and constant practice is engaged in little advance can be made. What was said in the last chapter on the actor should be taken to heart. Nothing but conscientious and sustained effort can bring success to the amateur player. This means, of course, the sacrifice of some other interest, for it requires time. Some remarks of Mr. Nugent Monck, whose work at the Maddermarket Theatre at Norwich is perhaps the most important amateur theatrical undertaking in England, are interesting in this connection. He says of his players:

They were all workers, at home or elsewhere, and were drawn from every class of the community. Some of the actors were of the professional class, such as solicitors, and others artisans, clerks and shopkeepers. If they wanted to act they had to come under a very strict discipline. They had to attend punctually at the theatre whenever required. This involved the abandoning of any other social life which they were in the habit of enjoying.

#### STUDY THE PERSONALITIES OF THE PLAYERS

Let me say how essential it is to study the personalities of one's actors. The aim of the producer is to get the best out of each one of them; to do that he must know them. The methods that serve for one player will not do for another. The producer has to find out the most effective way of influencing each individual player. This is as interesting as it is necessary, and the



study of the human nature of players is by no means the least important part of a producer's work.

There is an infinite variety of ways of getting people to do what one wants. Some actors must be persuaded, others encouraged, others gently compelled, others almost left alone. It is a good plan to take privately anything that a player finds exceptionally difficult. Most players get self-conscious at rehearsal if they feel they are not doing exactly what is wanted of them; and, often, the more conscientious they are, the more they are embarrassed. It is important not to let any player feel such embarrassment.

If a particular part will not come right leave it alone for a rehearsal or two and then try it again. If it still does not come right, try some other way of doing it.

Everything should be done at every stage of rehearsal to get the actor to think about his part and keep his imagination active. The producer should do everything in his power to enable the actor to visualise the character and the scene. He should describe the action that is required and the reason for it; he should analyse the words that are spoken, and see that their sense is thoroughly grasped. He should also be able to demonstrate what is required, speak the words, and make the movement. The object of such demonstration is not to induce the actor to imitate slavishly what is shown; but to illustrate the idea the producer desires to convey. An actor of ability will see what is wanted and will do it. Others must be got to do what is within their powers.

It is sometimes argued that a producer should not demonstrate what he wants but describe it, leaving the actual practice to the actor. "A first-rate actor should not be a producer," it is said. But I do not agree with this. A producer cannot have too much competence in acting or anything else. I have found it of great help to show a player what is wanted as well as one can. Sometimes, indeed, I have found by doing the action myself that what the actor has been asked to do can be improved upon. The difficulty that an actor has with any words or action should be clearly observed. I remember seeing a very capable amateur actor being rehearsed by a professional producer in the part of Petkoff in *Arms and the Man*. In particular I remember the business in Act III. when Petkoff puts on his jacket. The producer wanted this done in a certain way, the way, indeed, in which he had often done it himself when he had played the part; but he could not get the actor to do it readily, so he went on trying it over and over again until they both got exasperated and the attempt had to be abandoned. It was obvious to an observer that the actor could never be got to do the business in that way; the producer would have seen this had he studied his actor sufficiently and would have tried some other way. If an actor finds a certain movement awkward the producer should change it. There is always more than one way of getting a result. The producer must therefore vary his methods, and be skilful in managing every kind of personality.

The limitations of players should be observed. It is

impossible to expect the same thing from everyone, or to get one player to do a part exactly as another would. Indeed, the best work is only done when the personal characteristics, in other words the personality, of the particular actor are employed in the part.

If an actor obviously will not do what the producer wants he should be spoken to quietly. Let the matter drop at the moment and talk to him privately. If he remains obdurate then he must go; for the authority of the producer must be maintained.

I have known players to resist the efforts of a producer to get what he wants. They ultimately give way; but with the intention of playing their parts as they think fit at the performance. That, of course, is dishonest, and destructive of the co-operative spirit that is the essence of playing. Such a player should be excluded from a company, however excellent an actor he may be.

Actors sometimes talk about getting stale at rehearsal. This occurs when rehearsals become dull, when much time is wasted, and when players are kept waiting about with nothing to do. Very few plays are "over-rehearsed," if the producer has any real ability. There is always something fresh and interesting to do. But if a producer has little skill and not much imaginative grasp of a play, the actors will become "over-rehearsed" when they have come to the end of his and their resources. The producer should never let his cast get tired or dispirited: they must be kept fresh and keen, and this is possible only if they feel that they are definitely making progress at each rehearsal.

## DICTION AND PRONUNCIATION

During rehearsals the producer should pay close attention to diction and pronunciation. He cannot teach players how to speak, but he can at least correct the worst faults, and give them hints on how to practice. Good speaking is one of the essential qualifications for the stage, and a producer should do his utmost to encourage players to realise its importance and understand its general principles. Plays in verse are the best means of training in correct, well-balanced and good-toned speech, though the plays of Congreve, for instance, with their polished and beautiful phrasing, depending, as they do, for their effect on correct speaking, are as good. Modern comedy is perhaps the worst because it encourages and to some extent depends upon the careless, slipshod speech of the moment.

Refinement of speech in English is incorrect, and actors who attempt it make their speech false and affected. Correct English pronunciation, it must be confessed, is difficult to establish; for there is no standard of English speech. Mr. H. W. Fowler, in his *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, a book that every actor and producer will find a constant help, says, "The ambition to do better than our neighbours in many departments of life is a virtue; in pronunciation it is a vice; there the right ambition is to do as our neighbours." Actors, however, should follow that advice with some caution. The stage ought to maintain a standard of good speech. So much is this recognised in France that the pronunciation used on the stage

in the National Theatres in Paris is rigorously controlled. It is not desirable and it is contrary to national traditions for English speech to be standardised. The right pronunciation of the language is that which is appropriate to the place and the speaker. There is no standard English that is correct at every time and place. The actor must know the speech that is proper for the character he is playing. But the actor should also know the speech of good speakers and the pronunciation current among Englishmen of average education. The rule to observe is to avoid undue precision and all peculiarities and oddities of pronunciation. A certain degree of slurring of speech in English pronunciation is characteristic. What the actor has to do above everything in his speech is to be intelligible and agreeable. The audience must understand him. They must hear the actual words and draw from them the whole of their meaning. Dropping the voice at the ends of words and clipping the ends short must therefore be avoided. Dropping the final "g," though necessary in some dialects, is a vulgarism of smart society. What is more important, however, than simple accuracy in pronunciation is a pleasant voice. The test of good speaking is that which gives pleasure, and pleasure is more certainly created by an agreeable manner, good expression and absence of pedantry than by any attempt to render a standard speech, even if that were practicable.

Some words do, however, create difficulty. The spelling is not always a guide to the pronunciation. I once heard a producer insist on the "i" being sounded in "nuisance," because that is how the word is spelled.

It is correct, for instance, to pronounce "forehead" as "forrid"; "clothes" as "clows." These are familiar, however; unfamiliar words present a difficulty to most people, and some guide to their pronunciation is necessary. The pamphlet issued by the British Broadcasting Corporation on *Broadcast English* (London, 1928), containing recommendations to announcers regarding certain words of doubtful pronunciation is useful in this connection.

The aspirate, it should be noted, is usually only lightly sounded in educated speech. It is never stressed except to give emphasis to the word. It is never sounded in "hour," "heir," "humour" and other words, nor in the suffix "ham." The rules, however, are innumerable, and there are exceptions to most of them. The pronunciations given in dictionaries, it should be remembered, are not necessarily correct or standard pronunciations, but merely such as are current, or, in some instances, such as are preferred by the lexicographer.

There should be agreement upon the pronunciation of names and of any unusual words at the start, and the producer should at least get consistency in these matters. It is worth while going to great trouble to get accuracy in the pronunciation of names.

In speaking the same weight must not be given to all words. The sense of the speech must be conveyed to the audience, and this is done by stressing certain words and speaking the others lightly. The object of speech on the stage is to express meaning and to interest the audience. The actor, therefore, must under-

stand the meaning of what he has to say, and by due stress convey it; and by variation in the pitch of his voice and in time make that meaning interesting. The producer must give attention to these matters in rehearsal, listening to the way the players speak and encouraging them to listen to themselves.

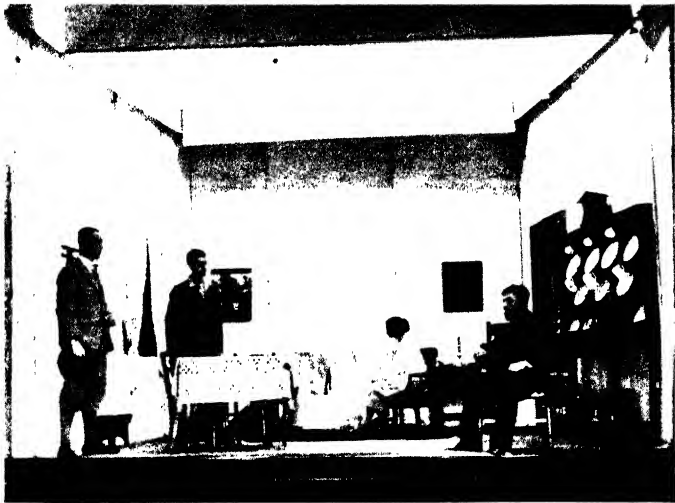
In verse plays it is difficult to avoid monotony. It can be overcome to some extent by paying attention to the sense and by seeing that the speech forms part of the dramatic action. Dialogue in verse tends to stand by itself, indifferent to sense or action, resting as it were on its mere music. That tendency should be resisted, not by destroying the verbal music but by maintaining the movement of the play, and expressing the dramatic action, so that the music of the speech is subordinated to the drama. A play in verse cannot, of course, be treated as if it were written in prose dialogue, and though some producers attempt to do it, they make a great mistake. The verse has a value which should be represented in the rhythm of the play: though it must be remembered that it is only one of the values that has to be respected.

#### DIALECT

When dialect plays are done the producer should make up his mind to what extent he is going to attempt to get it correctly spoken. Dialect is always difficult. The differences between Lancashire and Yorkshire speech, between Gloucestershire, Sussex and Cockney are unmistakable to those who know them, and in-



LONESOME LIKE. By Harold Chapin  
The Stockport Garrick Society



THE GLEN IS MINE  
The Stockport Garrick Society





correctly rendered these dialects are disagreeable. It is better to suggest the dialect by correctly saying a few of the easier words and getting as much as possible of the general construction and rhythm of the speech, than to stress it. In *Mr. Sampson* I did not attempt to get a Cornish accent, but tried to suggest something of English West-Country speech, which was assisted by the construction of the dialogue; it met with a great measure of success; was, I hope, offensive to no one, and did not overtax the players. The main point is to get consistency among the players. If one of them prides himself upon his accent he should not be allowed to use it beyond the use that is made of it by the rest of the cast. When producing *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet*, I made no attempt at a "Wild West" accent, but one or two of the players found great difficulty in refraining from speaking their own imitation of American. Another point in connection with dialect plays is that if dialect is used the speech must still be intelligible to the audience. There is no merit in being so accurate that no one but a native can understand what is said. I once had a man from Cork in an Irish play, but no one in the audience except the Irish could understand anything that he said; and one of the newspaper critics singled him out to find fault with his bad Irish!

The same remarks may be applied to the careless speech of a certain section of smart English society to-day, to what is known as the "Oxford" accent, and to the affected speech of suburbia. The actor should be capable of suggesting them while still remaining

intelligible. They should not, as I have already indicated, be adopted as his standard method of speech.

Any plays that depend upon a marked national accent such as English, Scottish, Irish or American should be attempted with caution. An American can be got to speak in an English way, just as an Englishman can be trained to speak as a Scot; but it is hard work and must be done under the training of someone whose native language is being attempted. Unless it can be done correctly, it is better to avoid a play that requires a national accent.

#### DRESS REHEARSALS

The producer should arrange if possible for the dress rehearsal to take place two days before the first performance; for it is an exacting experience and it is well to have time to recover from it. A good deal of preparation should be given to it. All the scenery, properties and costumes should be ready and carefully checked beforehand. Scene and lighting rehearsals should have been completed. The company should be called at least an hour before the rehearsal is due to begin, and the producer should pass each player dressed and made-up on the stage with the lighting on.

The play should be done exactly as at a performance; the curtain rung up and everything timed. If possible, the producer should allow the play to be gone through without interruption; only if some quite serious fault is shown, which demands repetition of a part, should it be stopped. Even then it is better to proceed, come back to the fault and go over the part again specially.

The producer should watch the performance carefully, take careful notes and speak to the players at the end. Unless there is something of great importance do not make any corrections; it is too late to alter anything and what is wrong will have to stay so. Give the players confidence; let them feel that they can look forward to the performance with prospect of success.

Dress rehearsals are usually very tiring, everyone is nervous, and often a great deal goes wrong. They are a great test of the producer's temper and patience. He should not be over-anxious. He should not expect everything to be smooth and easy. Usually the worse a dress rehearsal is the better the performance. Indeed, the producer should be suspicious and uneasy if the rehearsal proceeds without a hitch.

#### LOYALTY TO THE PLAY

When a play is given for a number of performances trouble sometimes arises because the players become influenced by what critics or their friends say about their performances; they attempt, in consequence, to alter business or their method of playing.

They should be warned against this before the first performance, and urged not to allow themselves to be affected by outside suggestions. It is possible that some suggestions made to them may be well founded; and this should be admitted beforehand; but it should also be pointed out that the play has been prepared as a whole and that alterations by individual players, however well intentioned, are bound to destroy its unity.

Actors who have confidence in the producer will be loyal to him.

#### REHEARSAL NOTES FOR THE PRODUCER

The following are a few notes for the producer:

Leave nothing to chance.

Start rehearsals promptly. The producer should never be late and should inculcate such a sense of responsibility in the players that they are always punctual. This is one of the most certain means of creating a sense of efficiency and maintaining an atmosphere in which discipline is easy.

Visitors should never be allowed at rehearsals. They may cause distraction and create embarrassment. Players should not be permitted to bring their friends. Only those who are concerned with the play should be present at any time. I have never found any good to come from the presence of outsiders, and frequently much harm. Visitors may talk about what they have seen to their friends, with results that are never advantageous, and they are liable to discuss their playing with the actors and interfere with what is being done.

Talking and laughing by those who are waiting to come on should be forbidden. It is irritating to players who are working, and those who are self-conscious are likely to feel that their playing is being discussed. Players waiting for their call should be silent.

Get form and design in the placing of the actors and in their movement from one part of the stage to an-

other. This can be done even in naturalistic plays with natural effect.

Don't let players mask one another.

Don't put important actions behind tables or chairs or other furniture.

Don't let players stay for long at the sides with the centre vacant.

Rehearse entrances and exits frequently with great care to get them perfect.

When two actors enter a scene one after another, it is usually better for the second to speak first.

Let any properties handled be clearly seen by the audience: practice this carefully.

Pay great attention to pauses. Have as few of them as possible, but make them significant when you do use them.

Warn the players about waiting for laughs when speaking and advise them what to do.

Sometimes when a player carries through an effective scene with success there is a disposition on the part of some of the cast to applaud him; but this is improper. Applause should never be permitted at rehearsals.

When rehearsing crowds give attention to each individual. Take each one separately, giving him definite words or a definite piece of business, until he understands what is wanted, and then rehearse them together.

Amateurs often find difficulty in making love on the stage. They show signs of embarrassment. Audiences usually do not help them; for unless the business is

done straightforwardly they too become self-conscious. Indeed, a certain section of any audience seems unable to witness love-making, however competently it is performed, without exhibiting signs of self-consciousness. Love-making should be carefully rehearsed. It should be done simply, and so that no question of the personal relations of the players concerned need arise. An embrace should be rehearsed as a series of movements, and a kiss should not be a hurried peck, but done smoothly, in the proper stage way, not directly on the mouth.

There is a technique of cues. Generally speaking, they should be taken up quickly. There should not be the slightest pause. Slow cue taking makes a play drag more than anything else. But cues should not be taken at the same speed throughout the play or a sense of monotony will be created.

Pay great attention to the climax. Every play and every act in every play has a main point of interest; see that it is brought out. Work up to it, and work away from it. This is only to say that every moment of a play has not the same value. This does not mean that everything else can be neglected except the climax. The producer should give attention to every detail and every moment of the play; but he must construct and bring out the main situation.

It is useful at times to have a word rehearsal. Never permit carelessness with words. If there is any difficulty, make the cast sit down and have a word rehearsal, without action. Let them say the words rapidly and insist on absolute accuracy.

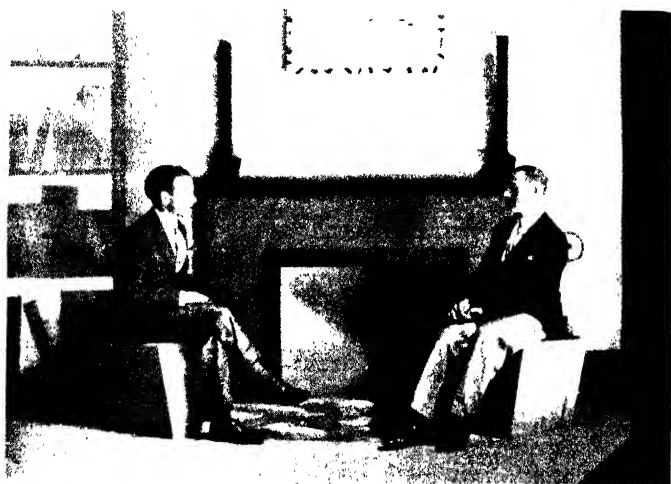






WHEN THE HEART IS YOUNG. By W. Millington Linn  
The Welwyn Theatre Repertory Company (1928)

*Produced by C. B. Purdon*



WHEN THE HEART IS YOUNG. By W. Millington Linn  
The Welwyn Theatre Repertory Company (1928)

The time required to rehearse a play depends largely on the players. In general, a full length play will take four weeks, rehearsing every evening. A one-act play will take ten days under similar conditions.

Pay careful attention to the curtain at the end of each act. Make up your mind whether it is to come slowly or quickly. Rehearse curtains until you get them right.

Give instructions to players beforehand about taking calls at the end of the play. Get them all on the stage immediately after the final curtain and do not allow them off until you give the word.

#### REHEARSAL NOTES FOR THE ACTOR

The actor is urged to study the chapter on the actor, and the following notes:

Study the play as a whole.

Learn the words of your part quickly and accurately.

Take down notes of what the producer says to you either on your script or in a note-book.

Create in your mind the character you have to play and concentrate your thoughts upon it at every available moment, especially at rehearsals, and always at performances.

Be consistent in playing your part.

Sustain your part throughout the time you are on the stage.

Don't play now in one key and then in another.

Study the playing of the other actors and the relation of their parts to yours.

Keep your head and eyes up. Don't look on the stage. Many amateurs enter a scene with their eyes down, and let their eyes constantly fall when speaking. This is one of the worst and commonest faults.

Practice before a mirror as much as possible.

Practice entering a room, opening the door and shutting it after you, until you can do so neatly and without fumbling.

Practice crying and laughing until you can do either naturally.

Practice gestures, particularly movements of the arms and hands. Do not make them mean or cramped. Let them be bold and from the shoulder.

Practice facial expressions.

Practice walking, sitting, standing.

Practice saying your part in every tone of your voice.

At a performance never correct a verbal mistake. If you say by accident something that makes nonsense and leave out an essential word or idea that affects the action, make good the omission in words of your own. Remember that audiences usually do not notice mistakes unless they are corrected.

If anything goes wrong at a performance play as if everything were all right.

If an essential hand property is missing when you require it at a performance substitute something else and it probably will not be noticed.

If a door comes open accidentally, or the corner of a rug gets kicked up, or a table-cloth gets askew, or something is dropped on the floor—put it right if you

can do so naturally and if it would be in character to do so.

Always turn towards the audience and into the scene, not away from it, unless the producer specially wants the contrary.

When kneeling, kneel on the knee that is nearer to the audience.

As a general rule, when standing, the foot nearest to the audience should be drawn back.

Cultivate the habit of standing still—that is, the habit of repose. Listen to the other players, and follow the action of the play in your mind. Don't have your mind concentrated on your next speech. Let your speech, when it comes, be said as though you had never said it before.

Do not be obviously waiting for your cue. Don't follow the dialogue with your lips.

Wait for laughs to finish. Never speak through the laughter of the audience. You must judge by experience when the right moment to continue arrives, it is usually just before the laughter completely dies down. Do not give the impression, however, that you are waiting for the laugh to cease. Be ready for laughs in unexpected places.

Remember that every speech in your part has relation to what some other player has said or is to say.

If you feel nervous, don't let that worry you. All good players are nervous. If you remain indifferent you will never play well.

## CHAPTER V

### STAGE-MANAGEMENT

#### THE NEED FOR THE STAGE-MANAGER

Stage-management means the organization of the stage as a working machine. In it is involved the efficiency of play production. From the front curtain to the back wall, everything and everyone in the theatre must be made subject to it. At one time the stage-manager was responsible for the preparation of the play—the production as we now call it; and, though to-day production is in the hands of another person, the specialised work of the stage-manager is the first condition of successful stage representation.

The producer is in authority over the stage, but the stage and its staff should be in charge of the stage-manager, and the producer should work through him. The functions of the two are different. It is possible that the producer may be his own stage-manager in some amateur companies; but this should be avoided if possible, for there is much work for a stage-manager to do that the producer, unless he is a full time man, will find it difficult to combine with his other duties. There should, therefore, be someone appointed whose duty it is to take charge of the stage and its mechanical

operation. He should be in charge of scenery, properties and lighting, though he may have others under him to attend to particular branches of the work. In fact, he should be in complete mechanical charge of the play when the producer has done his work. It will be advantageous in this chapter to consider the stage-manager as a distinct person, and stage-management as a distinct part of the work.

#### SHOULD THE PRODUCER OR STAGE-MANAGER ALSO ACT?

Before proceeding further, this may be the place to consider whether a producer, or anyone with stage duties, should also undertake a part in a play. Undoubtedly it is an advantage from the point of view of the efficient working of the stage for players to have no other duties whatever. But this is seldom practicable on the amateur, or even the professional, stage. Often stage hands have to appear as supers; often the producer has to play the principal part. What should be the rule? I think that neither stage-manager, stage-carpenter, electrician nor costume mistress should play. They have duties which often have to be attended to while the play is on, or just as an act opens or closes. They should be strictly confined to their respective duties.

The producer, on the other hand, unless he also acts as his own stage-manager, can play; for he has no duties at an actual performance, except perhaps to watch the play. If possible, however, the producer

should not play at all. He will find it often a handicap at rehearsal. At the same time a producer may find it more satisfactory to play an important part himself than to rehearse someone else in it. There is no doubt that it is easier to play a part that is really difficult than to produce an actor in it who is not thoroughly competent. But this should be an exception rather than the rule, and a producer should keep himself free for his main task.

#### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE STAGE

A stage-manager should have practical knowledge of stage work; if an amateur has to take it up he should make himself acquainted with the actual working of a professional stage. The stage personnel consists of the following:

- Stage-manager.
- Prompter.
- Stage carpenter.
- Properties.
- Electrician.
- Wardrobe Mistress.

##### (a) *Stage-Manager*

The stage-manager should have his own working copy of the play. In it he should mark all effects, entries, warnings for entries, warnings for curtains, and curtains.

He should have a scene plot with plans (and if

possible sketches) of each scene or act, the position of all furniture being marked upon them. He should have a complete property list, arranged under acts or scenes. And he should have a lighting plot for the electrician.

The producer should get into touch with the stage-manager immediately he starts on the play, give him full instructions and take him into his confidence. Problems arising from the planning of the scene should be discussed with him, and his active co-operation secured. Too often the stage-manager is forgotten until the last moment, with the consequence that the producer loses the advantage of his help and the stage-manager is not able to do justice to his work. The stage-manager should, if possible, be able to take charge of occasional rehearsals if the producer is unable to be present.

When a scene is set it should be carefully examined to see that it is secure, that all lights behind it are properly masked, and that all properties are firm and not inclined to move about or fall down.

The stage-manager should be satisfied that all the cast are present at least half an hour before the start of a performance.

Instructions should be given to players as to their conduct on the stage during performances. Silence should be strictly maintained behind the scenes on the stage and on the approaches, when the curtain is up. Smoking should never be permitted because of the danger of fire. Players should not come on the stage until they are called, unless there is ample room in the wings or at the back, when, if they keep silent and out of



the way, there is no reason why they should not be there.

Players must not, however, do anything to cause them to forget the cues for their entrances. At a first performance the stage-manager should give attention to this by warning the actor; but the responsibility rests with the actor himself.

Warning should always be given in the dressing rooms half an hour before the play is timed to start; beginners called five minutes before, and all warned just before the curtain rises.

In starting a play or an act the stage-manager proceeds as follows:

- (1) He sees that all beginners are in their places.
- (2) He then gives the warning that the curtain is about to rise by ringing the bells to dressing rooms, foyer, auditorium, orchestra, etc., or by knocking on the stage, or by any other customary means.
- (3) He gives the signal to the electrician to bring stage-lights up and dim the house-lights.
- (4) He finally rings to the man operating the curtain to raise the tabs.

Players should be instructed to keep clear of the stage during the changing of scenes, unless they have been given duties in connection with it. No one should be allowed on the stage except actual workers at such times, as they are apt to get in the way and cause confusion and delay.

The stage-manager should not allow players to place



THE COFFIN. By John Taylor  
The Welwyn Theatre Repertory Company (1928)  
*Produced by C. B. Purdom*



THE WELWYN THEATRE: INTERIOR



properties on the stage or to be otherwise helpful; they should be off-stage.

In some companies, actors have the habit of looking at the audience through the curtains. This is a bad practice and should be forbidden.

The stage-manager should keep a time sheet for each performance recording the start and finish of each act.

### (b) *Prompter*

The prompter should be selected when the play is cast and should attend all rehearsals. He should have an interleaved Prompt Copy handed to him by the producer, and should enter into this copy all instructions given by the producer. Instead of having an interleaved copy of the play in which to enter positions and business, a small manuscript book may be employed, paginated throughout on the right-hand page to agree with the pages of the play. All positions, etc., should be fully written down in this book, the script or book of the play being marked for reference.

The prompter should follow the work of the producer closely and become thoroughly familiar with the play. Prompting is difficult work, requiring close attention. The players should have the opportunity of getting familiar with the prompter's voice at rehearsals. If that is done they will more readily hear his voice should they require his assistance at a performance. The prompter should learn to speak clearly, distinctly, and in a sufficiently loud tone to be heard by the players. He should know the parts of the dialogue where

players are liable to go wrong; but he should always be ready for emergencies, for lapses of memory are liable to occur at the most unexpected moments. If the prompter be ready with his prompting immediately he is required, there will be little opportunity for the audience to notice him at work. He should know just the right amount to say to put the actor right. Once an actor shows signs of forgetfulness the closest possible attention must be directed to him.

The prompter must stand or sit where he can get a full view of the stage and the players. If the stage is so constructed that there is not sufficient space for him to do this, mirrors must be placed to give him a view. The place for the prompter is on the actor's left. Sufficient light, properly shaded, should be provided for him, with, if possible, a desk for his book. He should have close at hand the necessary electric switches or other means of warning the orchestra, the curtain operator, and the electrician for the house lights.

### *(c) Stage Carpenter*

The stage carpenter who knows his job is the handiest man on the stage. He can do anything and everything, and often do it well. He does not lose his head, he is ready for emergencies, and he can make anything that is wanted.

There is a special technique in the construction and adaptation of scenery which can only be learned on the stage or in a scenery workshop. The ordinary carpenter makes everything too heavy, puts too much

material in it, and too much time too. Never get scenery made in an ordinary joiner's shop; for it will cost three or four times more than it is worth and will be difficult to manipulate. The company that has a carpenter with stage experience should look after him, and those that have not should look out for one as soon as possible.

The stage carpenter is responsible for setting and striking the scenes. He will rehearse the setting of the scenes, and when they are passed by the producer and the stage-manager will pack or fly the flats and cloths in proper order for the performance.

#### *(d) Properties*

Everything on the stage except the actual flats or cloths for the scene are "props." The property man is in charge of all properties and furniture, and is responsible for placing them in position and moving them after each act. Frequently he is the same person as the stage carpenter or works under his control. A property man should be appointed for every play. "Hand-props" are what the player has to bring on with him; they should be kept in charge of the property man, as a general rule, though sometimes it is convenient for the actor to look after them himself. There should, however, be no doubt who is responsible for any particular props. The property man should have a complete list of the props for which he is responsible, stating the act in which they are used.

All properties for each particular scene should be

put together at a convenient part of the back stage. There should be a place for everything. This enables a scene to be set quickly. When a scene is "struck" the properties should be kept together.

(e) *Electrician*

The stage electrician should not only be an experienced electrician, but must have knowledge of stage lighting. He gets a whole chapter to himself later on. Avoid amateur electricians if you can; get a proper tradesman.

(f) *Wardrobe Mistress*

There should be someone in charge of all costumes, to be responsible for having them ready for the dress-rehearsal and performances, for their cleaning, repair and condition generally. The wardrobe mistress should be provided with accommodation, even if it be no more than a part of the ladies' dressing room; but a separate room is better. She should be prepared to undertake the repair of costumes during the performances. Dressers should be appointed to help the players with their dressing and make-up. If the cast is small one man and one woman are sufficient; but if it is large more than one will be required.

## EATING AND DRINKING

Eating and drinking on the stage needs practice: it is not so easy as it seems. It must be well timed: a player must not have his mouth full when he gets his cue.

All foods eaten on the stage must be soft and easily disposed of. Portions should be small. Bread and butter can be the genuine thing, but it should be cut thin. There must be a semblance of eating rather than actual consumption of food, but the semblance must be convincing. The property man is responsible for all foods and drinks used as properties.

It is not necessary to use actual wines and spirits as properties. Indeed, it is better not to permit stimulants on the stage at all.

*Red wines* can be represented by water and cochineal.

*White wines* by weak tea according to colour.

*Sparkling wines* by ginger ale.

*Champagne* by champagne cider.

Sponge cake, brown bread, gingerbread and jelly make a large variety of foods.

In realistic plays it is necessary to have the appearance of real things. In poetic or fantastic plays it is better to avoid realism in food and drinks; there is, in such plays, no need to pour out actual liquid from one vessel into another. The action can be done, and also the action of drinking, and both actions must be properly rehearsed and be convincing.

### STAGE EFFECTS

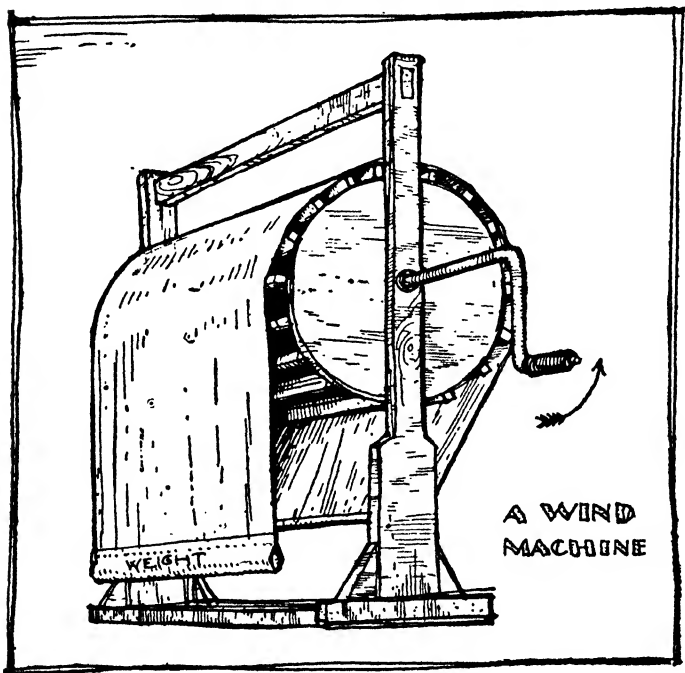
All effects "off" must be well rehearsed, properly timed, and under the control of a reliable person. Often the stage-manager attends to them himself.

The following are some of the more usual effects required:



*Thunder.* Have an iron sheet 6' x 3' thick as a permanent part of your stage equipment. The effect is got by shaking it.

*Wind.* Make a wooden cylinder with two circular end pieces joined by laths nailed to them and fitted in a frame with a handle and cover the cylinder with ordinary canvas.



*Horses.* Two halves of cocoa-nut shells knocked on the wall for street or road effect, and on a leather cushion for running on turf. There are special clackers which are more effective.

*Lightning.* An old file and a carbon fixed to a piece of flex and plugged up. When the effect is required rub the carbon on the wire. Lightning can also be done by turning the stage light rapidly on and off.

*Rain.* Roll some shot in a tin; or peas on a large drum. If the rain is to be seen let rice drop through a trough, if you have no water-tank.

*Snow.* Use an effect lantern. Or small pieces of white paper hung in a canvas trough with holes in it. The trough should be suspended over the side and pulled from side to side. Put salt on the players' boots and clothes.

*Sea.* Sound of sea-waves can be done as for rain; use rice for the sound of the spray, throwing it up and letting it fall.

*Door closing.* Use a heavy weight, or bang one of the dressing-room doors.

*Door knocker.* Fix an ordinary door knocker to a piece of wood, not to the scenery.

*Revolver shots.* Hit a leather cushion with a thin cane.

*Heavy Gun-fre.* Use the big drum. Or fire a revolver into a dust-bin in a passage or small room near the stage.

*Exhaust Steam.* Use a compressed air cylinder.

*Train.* Two pieces of glass paper rubbed together for the steam; and heavy iron rollers for the wheels. Or run a garden roller across the back-stage.

*Carriage or horse-cart.* Run light rollers across back-stage or small barrow wheels.

*Broken glass or china.* Tip some broken glass or china from one box to another.

*Lions, Bears, etc.* Howl through a lamp chimney.

*Opening Champagne bottle.* Burst a paper bag.

*Crowd.* The noise of a crowd "off" should be got by a number of players having each certain words to say and they should be placed in a passage or room near the stage. Sometimes a gramophone can be used.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE STAGE

#### THE NECESSITY FOR THE STAGE

A play given in a drawing room is very different from the same play in a theatre; the illusion is not conjured up, the too close intimacy between the actors and the audience makes it difficult to bring the play to life. From this fact comes the importance of the stage. It may consist of boards on trestles, or the elaborately equipped stage of an up-to-date theatre; but essentially it is the same thing, the attempt to establish the convention of an imaginary world: the place to which the players remove themselves from the mundane world to the world of their own.

I have produced plays in drawing rooms, small halls, and in barns where there is no stage, and I confess that the experience has always interested me. I find, however, that nearly all players dislike acting among or on the same level as the audience; they find a stage necessary for their composure. It is difficult, as I have just said, to create illusion unless one is separated from the audience, and I sympathise with the players' difficulty. When actors are among the audience, with no footlights to cut them off and no darkness to obliterate

them, it is hard to make the necessary atmosphere, to concentrate upon the play. It is especially hard in realistic and modern plays; in poetic or rhetorical plays, in Shakespeare for example, it is not so difficult. For what has to be done always by the actor is to create the stage, to build up the remote world, to separate himself from the audience even in a drawing room or a barn. I do not believe that the Elizabethan actor stepping on to the platform-stage among the audience, declaiming his words to the audience, seeing them in the full light of day, counted himself as one among them and spoke to them as one of themselves. He was on a platform above them, he was on a stage apart and he lived and moved in a world other than theirs. The stage, therefore, is necessary to the actor and the play.

#### WHAT THE STAGE IS

What is a stage required to be if it is to provide satisfactory conditions for play production? It should afford a good view from every part of the auditorium. It should be of sufficient size for the action that is to take place upon it, with space for the actors to get on and off. It should have accommodation for the necessary scenery, both when in use and in the intervals of the acts. It should have lighting for the play. And it should have rooms for the actors.

Perhaps the simplest form of stage is that of the Elizabethan theatre. This consisted of a platform protruding into the auditorium, with entrances upon it for the actors at each side, a small inner stage at the back

covered by a curtain, and a balcony over it. This, or some adaptation of it, is the best stage for Shakespearean plays, and indeed it is suitable for everything except plays that require period furnishing, and even such plays can be staged on it by skilful producers. Elizabethan stages are not, however, generally available, and are not likely to be built in the future except by enthusiasts.

The usual form of stage is that constructed through an opening in the end wall of the theatre, enclosed by a proscenium frame and a curtain. This stage has space at the sides to accommodate scenery, properties, and the actors when not in the scene, and usually space overhead, called the flies, for lighting and for the purpose of flying scenery and stage cloths.

### THE AUDITORIUM

Before describing the construction of the stage it may be as well briefly to refer to the auditorium, because the stage is there for the sake of the audience. A rectangular form of building is the least expensive, and is all that is necessary for an audience up to 1,000. Larger buildings can be made fan-shaped with the stage at the narrow end. The interior walls of a rectangular building can be made to slope at each side towards the end at which the stage is placed, and the space used for dressing rooms, etc. This can be done because the rows of seats towards the front must be reduced as end seats on front rows do not permit of a good view of the stage. The audience must be





ADAM THE CREATOR — By Karl and Joseph Capek  
The Cambridge Festival Theatre

*Produced by T. G. Swalle*



THE CARTHAGINIAN. — By Frank Taylor  
The Cambridge Festival Theatre

*Produced by Terence Gray*

able to see the play in comfort; the floor should be inclined, not less than 1 inch per foot. If the building is required for other purposes, which require a level floor, it is possible to construct the floor in such a way that it can be levelled, but the cost is great, and it is not advisable to attempt it.

At the Welwyn Theatre, opened in 1928, the width of the auditorium is 66 feet, and its length on the ground floor is 95 feet, the balcony extending a further 5 feet 6 inches. The incline of the floor is .79 inch per foot, which is barely sufficient. There are gangways in the centre and at each side; the seats are placed in straight rows, 16 each side of the centre gangway. The ground floor can accommodate 918 and the balcony 250, a total of 1168.

Seating should be carefully chosen, it should be comfortable, not noisy in movement, and easy to clean and maintain. It increases the comfort of the audience if the floor can be carpeted; if this cannot be done the gangways should be covered with a good strong carpet underlined with felt, the floor on which the seats are placed being covered with linoleum or stained and left bare. Upholstered seats and a carpeted floor are of acoustical value. Acoustics is another matter to which special attention should be given in the design and construction of the building. Among other important questions are heating, ventilation, and provision for cleaning.

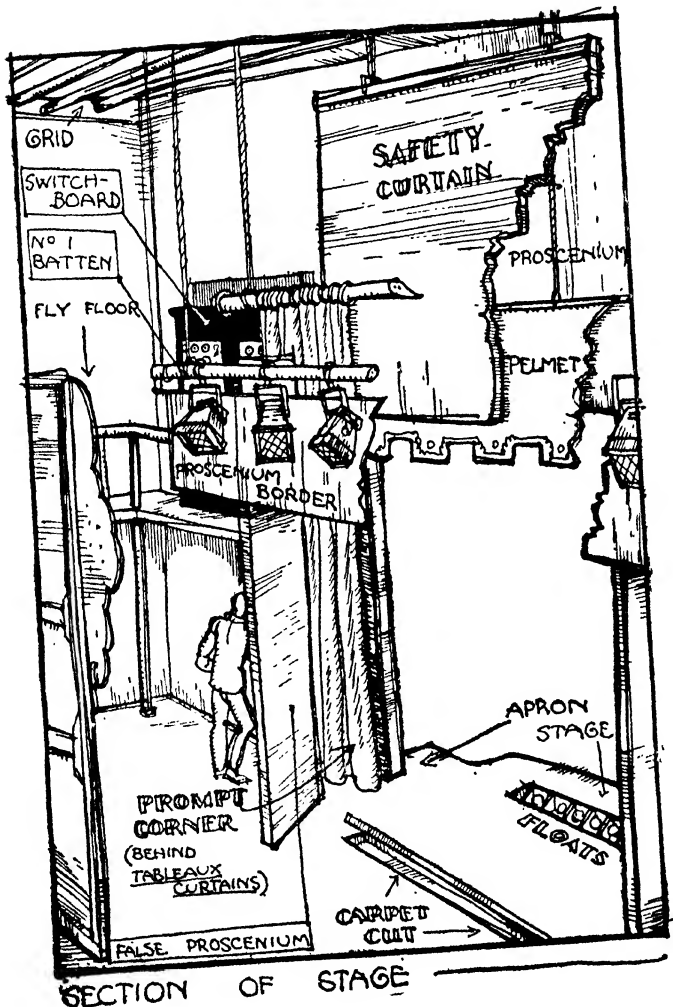


## THE CONSTRUCTION OF A STAGE

An ideal stage should have a movable proscenium-opening so that the width of the stage can be made to suit the play. It should also have a wide fore-stage over the space usually occupied by the orchestra. A wide proscenium-opening and a wide fore-stage are useful in Shakespearean and Greek plays and in all spectacular plays.

A proscenium-opening of 28 feet, a height of 15 feet and a stage depth of not less than 20 feet makes a practicable small stage for almost all purposes. In constructing a new stage it is advisable to get the maximum height and width of proscenium-opening that the building will permit. There should be plenty of working space at the sides, and height above the stage for flies. To be fully useful the flies should be of sufficient height to fly the longest curtains, cloths or flats that are likely to be used. The stage floor should be level, not raked. Until recently it was the practice to rake all stage floors, that is to build them so that they sloped towards the audience. The reason for this was to give the audience a better view of the stage. But it is very inconvenient to have the floor of the stage at an angle, and raking is now never done, for its disadvantages outweigh its small advantages.

The height of the stage floor from the floor of the auditorium should be no more than is necessary for a clear view. It should be the aim to make it possible for the audience to look down upon the stage so that the floor and the tops of tables can be seen by those



sitting in front; this depends upon the slope of the auditorium floor.

The stage floor should be made of hard wood divided into sections  $15'' \times 3'9''$ , running from P.S. to O.P. to enable traps to be cut in it. The joists should run from back to front and be not less than  $3' 9''$  apart.

The proscenium is the name of the two sides and top of the stage facing the audience. A false proscenium border is hung close behind the top of the proscenium, and is lowered or raised according to the height of the scenery used to prevent the audience from seeing over the top of it.

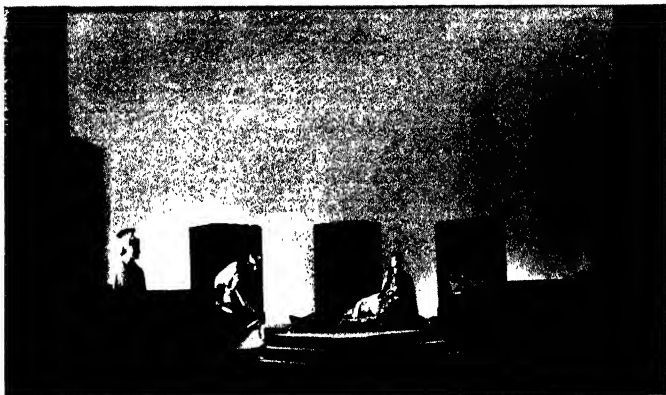
A movable torment is placed on each side of the proscenium to mask in the actors standing at the side from the audience.

A carpet cut should be constructed in the stage floor just behind the front curtain for clipping in the stage cloth to prevent it from tripping anyone over, and to avoid the use of tacks.

Dips are cut in the stage floor in the working area for plugging in stage arcs and other lights.

The flies is the space over the stage used to accommodate curtains, cloths or scenery, and it is called the "flies" because the stuff flies up. There should be a fly floor just above the height of the proscenium opening on the O.P. wall for working the lines for scenery and curtains.

The grid is a skeleton roof just under the roof of the stage, allowing sufficient headroom for a man to work on it. There the pulleys are fixed, called blocks



THE CARTHAGINIAN — By Frank Taylor  
The Cambridge Festival Theatre

*Produced by Terence Gray*



THE CARTHAGINIAN. — By Frank Taylor  
The Cambridge Festival Theatre

*Produced by Terence Gray*



and leads, for flying scenery and curtains. The grid is usually made of timber, but it is sometimes made of steel joists. Three blocks are used for each cloth and one lead. One block is O.P., and one P.S., and one centre. They are called "long," "centre," and "short"; the nearest line to the fly floor is the short. These lines are run through the blocks and let down to the stage. The other end of each line is run across the grid to the lead, which has three wheels, and is run through and lowered to the fly floor, and is tied off on a large cleat which is fixed on the front of the fly floor.

A lantern light, with blinds, is necessary over the grid.

A permanent cyclorama of concrete, or plaster on a metal framework, is a useful addition to the stage if the stage be deep enough, and if there is sufficient height to fly all scenery out of the way. If, however, the stage is not deep, with plenty of space in the wings, it should be done without as it will be found an inconvenience. Also to get the full use of the cyclorama it must be possible to fly the scenery completely out of sight of the audience and out of the way of the lighting required for the cyclorama. A lighting pit must be constructed for the cyclorama.

The height of the stage is determined by the height of the proscenium-opening. It should be sufficient to fly all scenery, and to allow for the grid and working space, which is approximately one and a half times the height of the proscenium-opening. If there is a cyclorama the stage will have to be still higher because of the lighting.



Jacob's ladders used to get to the grid are ladders placed straight up against the wall.

A platform for the switchboard should be erected about 8 feet from the floor of the stage on the prompt side.

The stage should be closed off from the dressing rooms so that noise and light cannot penetrate to it. The doors on the stage should be so constructed that they close quietly, and do not bang. Draughts on the stage should be guarded against. There should be access to the stage from the exterior of the building for the reception and removal of scenery and properties, with large doors on to the stage. The number of doors leading directly on to the stage should be as few as possible so as not to interfere with stage working and the stacking of scenery and properties. The back wall of the stage, if plastered and without doors or projections, can be used in place of a back-cloth.

There must be gas and water supplies on the stage, and workshops on or beneath the stage, with gas and water laid on for the stage carpenter and the stage electrician. A workshop for the stage carpenter large enough for the making and painting of scenery is essential, either in the theatre or near it. Storage room for scenery and properties is required.

There must be at least two good dressing rooms with lavatory accommodation. The dressing rooms must have space for hanging clothes; a good mirror along the wall with a fixed table under it, both of sufficient length to give ample room for the number of players likely to use the dressing room; there must be



good lighting; and each dressing room should have accommodation for washing, with hot and cold water supply. A large room, not a dressing room, in which the actors can meet while waiting for their calls, or in the intervals, is a great addition to their comfort.

There should be entrances to the stage and dressing rooms for the actors without their having to pass through the auditorium.

The stage floor will need a covering. Sail-cloth is the best material for the purpose.

An asbestos safety curtain will usually be required by the responsible fire authority.

In the above description the term "prompt side" is used as a technical term, it always means the left-hand side of the stage, facing the audience; it has nothing to do with the actual position of the prompter, though his normal position in the English theatre is on the left.

### USING THE STAGE ONE HAS

Unless a theatrical company has a permanent stage specially built for its requirements, it must use the stage it has. The problem for most producers and stage-managers is how to adapt to their own needs the stage which is at their disposal. The last thing to attempt is to make all stages of one pattern, or to endeavour to convert every temporary stage into a semblance of a conventional stage. The tendency of most amateurs is to disguise the platform they use until it becomes the nearest thing to a theatrical stage. This is often unnecessary. A plain bare platform gives no other oppor-

tunity, of course, but to put the scene on it and make it as practicable and attractive as possible. But many platforms or stages that have not been constructed for theatrical purposes, have architectural features that can be worked into a scene with advantage. The platform may be of a peculiar width, or shape, or it may have projections, or pillars, or doors, or an alcove, or other features; these should be used, whenever possible, as part of the scene, in the same way as a permanent stage setting would be used.

The producer should look at his stage and study it, adapting his play to it, taking advantage of the scope it offers him, recognising its limitations and making the best of them. The play should, of course, be chosen in relation to the stage. Do not attempt to do a play that cannot possibly be put on the stage you have.

A producer who enjoys doing original work will not make a fuss about any stage, however inconvenient, and will do surprising things with it. I have used a stage twelve feet wide by eight feet high and eight feet deep on which it was impossible to use any scenery. In another place I constructed a stage of slightly larger dimensions in an opening of a wall, there being no space to bring the stage forward. I once had a platform, 45 feet wide, 10 feet high and 20 feet deep, in a hall 50 feet wide and 50 feet deep, and on that stage I found it possible to erect two scenes, one on the right of the stage and the other on the left, which saved the labour of changing. In this way Shaw's *Fanny's First Play*, and Martinez Sierra's *Romantic Young Lady* and other plays were done.

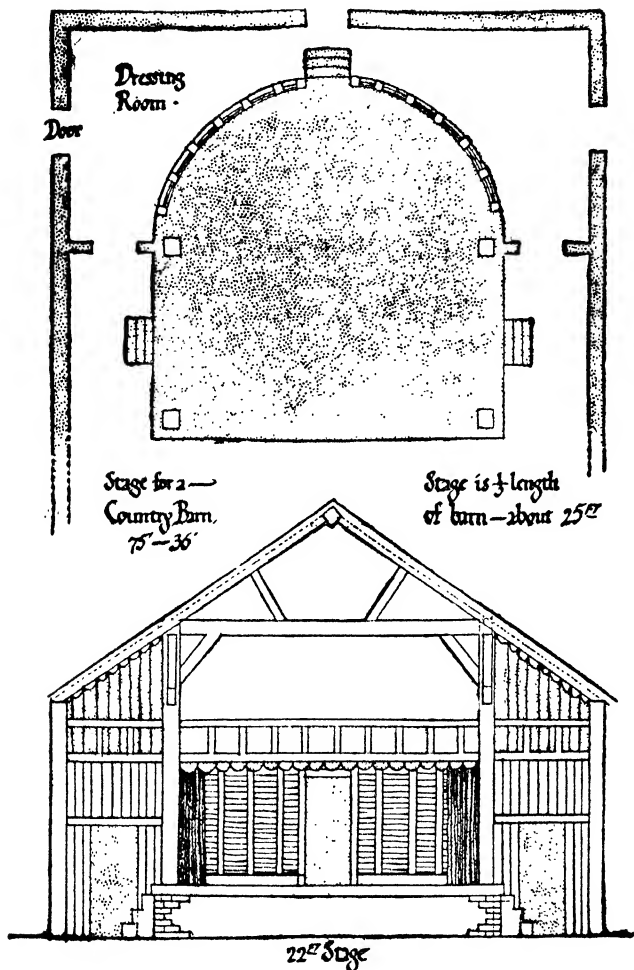
Amateurs are accustomed to working upon every kind of stage, almost all of them ill-equipped and restricted in size. Indeed, the number of satisfactory stages available for either professional or amateur players is remarkably small. Nearly all are inconveniently arranged, cramped in size, and out-of-date in their equipment. The manner in which amateurs overcome, often without proper equipment or sufficient knowledge, the difficulties created by inadequate stage accommodation is astonishing. It is perhaps the greatest handicap they have, and the greatest testimony to their enthusiasm.

#### THE NEED FOR SMALL THEATRES

Very few amateur companies have stages of their own in England. The Oxted and Limpsfield Players in Surrey, the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich, and the Unnamed Society of Manchester are among the few. The work of these companies has a permanence that is due very largely to their possession of a stage.

The advantages of having a stage of one's own are inconceivable. Only then can really good work be done. It gives an opportunity for experimenting, without which serious work on the stage is hardly possible. It makes possible the proper testing of lighting, the satisfactory designing of scenery and adequate rehearsal.

In America many amateur companies have theatres of their own that surpass anything that exists in England, among them the Dallas Little Theatre, Texas;



A SCHEME FOR A STAGE IN AN EXISTING BARN

Reprint used from *Drama*

the Pasadena Community Playhouse; the Cleveland Playhouse and the Berkeley Playhouse. A large number of American Universities and colleges have their own theatres too.

The outstanding need of the amateur dramatic movement is for small halls, seating from 350 to 600, with reasonable stage accommodation. There is a need for buildings of this sort in practically every town in England, including London, where it is hardly possible to get a theatre at all. If such halls were provided they would give immense impetus to the movement for the good productions of plays by amateurs. Expensive buildings are not required, and the stage accommodation need only be simple: the essential requisites are ample space, plenty of lighting points and two good dressing rooms.

### OPEN AIR STAGING

In choosing a stage for open air playing the greatest problem is to get the voices of the players heard. Therefore get shelter from winds. A courtyard of a house is a good position, or against the wall of a house. If it is necessary to go away from buildings a sloping site should be chosen with a heavy background of trees.

There must be entrances for the players, and accommodation for them where they can hear their cues and yet be out of sight and sound of the audience.

Painted scenery, stages or curtains should never be used in the open air.

## CHAPTER VII

### SCENERY

#### THE TEST OF SCENIC DESIGN

A great many people are to-day giving attention to designing scenery for the stage; it is a subject that strongly attracts many artists. Very few of the designs that are made, however, are ever carried out, and few of the designers have any practical knowledge of the working of the theatre; that is not their fault; for they get no opportunity of gaining it. Amateurs give as much attention to the scenery and the decoration of the stage as professionals, so that it can be treated here on first principles.

The scenery designer's business is to help the actor and the play, not to display himself. He must, that is, be subordinate to the idea. In a practical sense scenic design is a matter of continually overcoming difficulties—the play, the actors, the stage. It is an exacting art, calling for the utmost flexibility and power of adaptation that an artist possesses. Whoever takes it up has to place himself at the service of the theatre, becoming its servant.

Perspective drawings of scenery are deceptive. They cannot convey a correct idea, only a general impression.

When you see a drawing of a scene, after you have admired the draughtsman's technique and the charm of the design, ask yourself where the place of the actor is? Where does he enter, where go off, and where does he play? Ask the same questions when you examine those beautiful model stage settings that are shown at many exhibitions. If these questions cannot be answered satisfactorily neither the designs nor the models are good.

We should be suspicious, therefore, of all pretty drawings. They rarely have anything to do with the theatre. The scenery designer must be able to prepare working drawings to scale. The producer must be able to understand and criticise those drawings.

#### THE SCENIC DESIGNER AND THE PRODUCER

The designing of scenery should be entrusted to an artist who can also design the properties, lighting and costumes. To get the scenery designed by one man and the costumes by another is to court the danger of divided and conflicting ideas. If the producer does not do this work himself, he must find an artist with whom he can work in complete accord. The designer must be prepared to work under the direction of the producer. When a producer asks an artist to come in and help him with designs for a play he may, unless he is very lucky in his man, be letting himself in for a great deal of trouble and much expense. The designer will tend to see the play in his own way and to prepare scenery and costumes that carry out his ideas rather







THE BIRDS. By Aristophanes  
The Cambridge Festival Theatre

*Produced by Terence Gray*



THE PASSION FLOWER. By Jacinto Benavente  
The Cambridge Festival Theatre

*Produced by Cyril Wood*

than the spirit of the production. One has only to call to mind the conflicts that Mr. Gordon Craig, the greatest artist of the theatre in our time, has had as a scenic designer in the theatres of Europe, when he has designed or attempted to design scenes that no one would have, to realise the necessity for the designer being subordinate to the direction of the play. Mr. Craig is of course essentially a producer, his designs are merely part of his conception of the play as a completed whole, so that it is impossible to use his designs unless he is in charge of the production—the play, actors and the stage as well as the scenery.

Therefore it is obvious that the producer must cooperate with the designer at the very start of the work upon the play, and they must work continuously together. The ideal thing is for the producer to make his own designs, as Mr. Craig does; but failing that he must at least know enough about design and costume to be able to explain what he wants and to see that he gets it. The producer, if he really knows his work, will use the scenic artist as he uses his players, employing his skill and genius for the result at which he aims. The scenic artist will contribute to that result, as the actor does, but he will not come into the production as an independent worker, seeking to express his own interpretation of the play.

### THE QUESTION OF REALISM

The scenery is the setting for the actor. It has no justification in itself. In its simplest form it must

express the scene in which the actor moves, in which the action of the play is performed, and in its most elaborate development it must not depart from that purpose.

In interior scenes on the stage the actual place can be suggested in its natural form; but in exterior scenes that is impossible. The most elaborate attempts at real scenes from nature ever staged at Drury Lane Theatre, or by Sir Henry Beerbohm Tree, notwithstanding live rabbits, dogs, horses, real water and real trees, were never anything but unreal though often beautiful pictures. Nature cannot be transferred to the stage. Therefore, in putting gardens and forests and open spaces on to the stage, it is impossible to do more than to suggest these places.

Even in interior scenes that get so near to the real thing, absolute realism is impossible and should never be attempted. The proscenium-opening is sometimes spoken of as the "fourth wall"—the wall that is taken away so that what goes on between the remaining three walls may be observed. But no play can be staged precisely as the three remaining walls of a scene. Think of any room that you know reproduced on the stage, and you will see that it would need rearrangement to be convincing, to be real there.

#### INTERIOR SCENES

If complete realism in the most realistic play can never be got, what then can be done? In realistic plays actual rooms should be suggested as nearly as possible.

They should have the appearance of solidity, as though they were part of a building; their walls should be firm, the flats should fit closely, their joinings being disguised; the walls, windows and fireplaces should be in character with the scene to be represented. The doors and windows should open and close easily, and the fastenings and locks should be in order. Any door or window supposed to lead into the open air should be well fitted so that any strong light outside is not seen round the edges.

In designing interiors it is necessary to study architectural design. The door, windows and fireplace must go not simply where they look well and are best for the action of the play, but in the right places. Many scenes put on the stage are architecturally impracticable. The same remark applies, of course, to exterior scenes where buildings or parts of buildings are represented.

An attempt should be made to get variety of shape. It is not necessary to make a rectangular box always. Instead of putting three walls on the stage it is occasionally possible to show only two. By means of built-out chimney breasts, and recesses, and by making one room lead off from another interest can be given to the scene. A feature can be made of a doorway, fireplace, or French window.

### EXTERIOR SCENES

In exterior scenes it is a first principle never to mix up real things with painted ones. There should be no

real plans on the stage at all. What should be aimed at is the suggestion of nature and the open air. In a realistic play which includes an exterior scene as well as interiors the exterior scene cannot be completely formalised if the interiors have been staged realistically. One justification for the "experimental" staging referred to later is the attempt to escape from the dilemma of staging outdoor scenes in conjunction with realistic interiors. If everything is formalised everything can be made consistent. With realistic treatment, however, the best rule is to simplify throughout. The atmosphere of nature can be suggested mainly by lighting on plain surfaces. If trees and shrubs have to be seen they should be conventionalised, and unobtrusive. The exteriors of buildings can be treated with a certain element of realism under such conditions; but never mix formalised or realistic in one scene—maintain one convention.

#### EXPERIMENTAL STAGING

In place of attempting realism or any conventions that approach it, a frankly non-realistic convention can be recognised and the play staged within its limits. In Germany and elsewhere in Europe, in America and to a less degree in England, and above all in Soviet Russia, the new experiments in staging plays get as far away from reality as possible. Not only is the stage unlike anything else ever seen in the world but the actors often look unlike human beings. The aim of all this extravagance and exaggeration is, at its best,

to convey the spirit of the play to the imagination of the audience; at its worst, it is to display the virtuosity or idiosyncrasies of producers and designers. Many amateur companies have taken part in this experimental work. There is every reason why they should, provided that the principle already stated in this chapter is observed, that the scenery is the setting for the actor and the action of the play. Scenery that exists for its own sake, however beautiful or extraordinary, does not belong to the theatre and should not be given room within it. Amateurs have been too much devoted, however, to naturalistic settings of the cottage type made familiar by the players from the Abbey Theatre, Dublin; they should get away from this convention and set their plays in more imaginative realms.

Usually plays have to be specially written or adapted for the new staging or else Shakespeare becomes its victim. I tried the experiment at the opening of the Welwyn Theatre of treating a realistic light comedy, written for conventional production, in this way. The play was entitled *When the Heart is Young*, by my friend Mr. W. Millington Limb, and the critics said that I spoiled a delightful little comedy; perhaps they were right. The scenes of the play were two drawing rooms in South Kensington, London; one belonging to an opulent manufacturer, the other to a highly placed civil servant. The principle observed in the production was to formalise the entire action of the play and to stage it with a complete absence of realism. I do not pretend that it was a success, for it demanded a great deal from the players, and the staging, lighting

and costumes were experimental. It also demanded much of the audience and many of them were perplexed. It showed, however, that non-realistic treatment of modern plays was practicable, and gave great scope to the actors as well as to the scenic designer. I hope to repeat the experiment elsewhere.

One form of experimental staging is that of the architectural stage in which a permanent setting is constructed capable of a certain amount of re-arrangement for different scenes. This is expensive in first cost, and can only be employed by a company with a theatre of its own.

Another method is to employ light canvas screens such as those invented by Mr. Gordon Craig. These can stand by themselves, and can be arranged in a large variety of forms.

Mr. Terence Gray at the Cambridge Festival Theatre, England, has constructed a standard set of scenery which is used in all productions at his Theatre. The flats were made of three-ply wood 4 feet wide and in various heights from 10 to 18 feet. They are braced to the stage in the usual way and sometimes hinged to stand by themselves. There are arches and other openings 3 feet wide for windows, doorways, etc., in some flats. There are a number of half-round columns constructed in the same way as the flats and of the same heights. There are boxes 18 inches square and in two lengths, 3 and 4 feet, covered with floor board on one side and at the ends to enable them to be stood upon, and three ply on the other side; one side is left open. There are sets of steps of the same widths and heights,

semi-circular, triangular and rectangular. The boxes can be built up one upon another together with the steps, and can be fitted into the openings with the flats. An almost infinite variety of scenes can thus be made. The flats and boxes are coloured with distemper as required.

At the Festival Theatre the tableaux curtains and a second set of curtains 10 feet upstage are made interchangeable and reversible, and the two sets of curtains in front of the cyclorama are also interchangeable and reversible. The curtains are not flown, but are run on rails with switch-arms and points. The policy of the theatre is to produce a new play each week during term, and the standard scenery, with the addition of a few special pieces is used for all productions. Mr. Gray is doing some of the most interesting experimental work in England. It should be said that the three-ply flats are heavy and difficult to lash together, and canvas flats would have certain advantages.

A cyclorama, such as that at the Cambridge Festival Theatre, and in a few other theatres in England, is used in many theatres in Germany and elsewhere abroad. It consists of a curved structure in plaster or concrete, with or without a dome. In most theatres where it exists it is a permanent fixture, but in some German theatres it is movable. It is of great value in exterior scenes giving when properly lighted depth and atmosphere to the scene, and it makes back-cloths unnecessary. In place of a permanent cyclorama it is possible to use canvas hung and kept taut in a semi-circle. If this is not possible, a plain back-cloth hung



flat but without wrinkles gives a reasonably good result, if well lit by powerful lamps.

### CURTAINS

Playing in curtains is an easy way out of many difficulties, and the method frequently adopted by those who do not like conventional stage scenery. It has a certain economy, because curtains can be used over and over again, and they are easy to handle; but their adaptability is restricted, and they tend to monotony of effect. No one who does much work on the stage and aims at getting the scene to contribute to the play can be satisfied with them for long. Curtains can be suspended on wires or rods, or hung on screens constructed in the same way as flats. Rings should not be sewn on to them; it is better to sew on hooks and keep the rings on the rods. Flats made the same height containing doors, windows, fireplaces, etc., can be inserted in the curtains, and made firm with braces as explained later on. Formalised trees, shrubs, etc., can be cut out of three-ply wood or profile board, painted, stood up or braced on the stage for use in exteriors. The curtains should be of a neutral colour that can take lighting, and they must be light-proof, otherwise there can be no lighting effects behind them and all lighting must be in front. A series of black curtains is useful.

### PRACTICAL MATTERS

In designing a scene the first step is to look at the stage and get to know its limitations and possibilities.



RICHARD III

The Cambridge Festival Theatre

*Produced by Terence Gray*



MADAM PEPITA By Martínez Sierra

The Cambridge Festival Theatre

*Produced by Norman Marshall*



The size of the scene that is practicable should be ascertained, measurements being taken of the height, depth and width of the stage. The space available for stacking scenery between the acts should be found out; for it is no use preparing scenery for which the stage has no accommodation.

Then the play must be studied. The scene must express the spirit of the play, and it must, I venture to say again, provide the setting for the actor. The size of the scene that the play requires must be adjusted to the size of scene that the stage allows for. It is a mistake to make all scenes the same width and depth; there should be variation.

Sketches of the scenes should be made, and, if desired, models; finally, working drawings to scale must be prepared for whoever is to construct them. The colours must be settled.

Properties, costumes and lighting must be given attention at the same time.

All this work should be done at an early stage while the play is in rehearsal or even before that. It should not be left to the last moment.

In constructing scenery, ease of handling must be considered.

#### *(a) Properties*

It is an important rule never to overcrowd the stage with properties or scenery. If the play has more than one scene the time taken in changing is increased if a large amount of material has to be moved; but even if there is no change of scene an overcrowded scene,

however realistic, always looks bad. I have seen interiors set on the stage, containing every conceivable article that might be found in an actual room of the kind represented, and the effect is confusing. Have only essential things. First of all, the properties that are actually used, next the very minimum that will give life to the scene and make it appear natural. It is a fact that the fewer things that are used, provided they are the right things, the more convincing the scene will be.

As an illustration I will give a description of the staging of *Mr. Sampson*, the one-act play by Mr. Charles Lee, the production of which was awarded the Lord Howard de Walden Cup in London and the David Belasco Cup in New York. The scene is the kitchen of a cottage in the West Country in England, inhabited by two sisters; the set used was an ordinary rectangular box set with a cottage window at the back, and a door leading into a garden; on the left a door opening off down stage; on the right, centre, a cottage kitchener with a mantelpiece over it. There was a plain exterior backing for the door and windows, brightly lit. The properties were as follows:

- Kitchen table.
- Cover for table.
- Four chairs.
- Grandfather clock.
- Kitchen dresser.
- \*Cups, saucers, dishes, plates on dresser.
- Family Bible.
- Work-basket with mending.
- Market basket with packets of flour, meat, etc.

Mixing bowl.  
Cooking fork.  
Basin for egg.  
Wooden spoon.  
Packet of dried fruit.  
Jug with milk.  
Basket of eggs.  
\*Hearth-rug.  
\*Kitchen fender and fire irons.  
\*Kettle.  
Tea-canister on mantelpiece.  
\*2 ornaments for mantelpiece.  
\*Coal scuttle with coal.  
\*Copper warming pan.  
\*2 Pictures.  
\*Wall calendar.  
\*Curtains for window.  
\*Flower pots for window.  
Halfpenny.  
Flower for buttonhole.

All the above properties, except those marked with an asterisk, were used or referred to in the play. Those marked with an asterisk were required to complete or give life to the scene. A real kitchen would contain a hundred or more useful or ornamental articles: but it was not necessary to add one thing more to make the scene appear completely natural. An attempt to copy reality would have made the scene confused.

As I have said, have only those things on the stage that definitely contribute to the scene and the play. If any thing can be done without, it should be omitted.

In preparing properties it should be remembered that cheap articles will usually do on the stage, as under the effect of lighting and distance they look different

from what they are. Indeed, as a general principle it is better not to have real things.

In realistic staging always have something resembling real food and drink, if they have to be used; liquid must be poured out, look the proper colour, and be drunk; the same with food. In formalised staging never use real food and drink, and frankly make the actions of pouring out liquids, drinking, eating, etc., without disguising the absence of real things.

A mirror used on the stage as a property may reflect the stage lights. If it does, get a packet of soap-powder, mix it into a lather and stipple on to the mirror with a sponge.

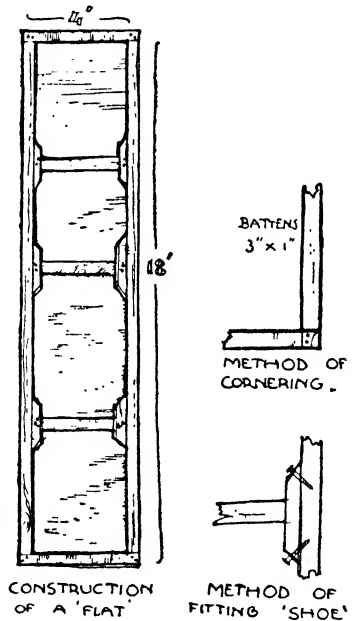
Highly polished furniture in a realistic scene may reflect the stage-lights. If so, brush on some weak size, which does not damage the furniture and is easily washed off.

### (b) *Flats*

The construction of flats is as follows. Frames are made out of 3"  $\times$  1" planed timber, the standard widths being 3', 4' or 6' and the height as required for the stage, either 12', 14', 16', or 18'. All flats should be made to a standard height and width. Each corner of the frame should be mortised and tenoned, and fastened by two wooden pegs glued in. There should be rails every 4 feet morticed into wooden shoes, the shoes being screwed on to the frames. Iron shoes and corner plates can be obtained from stage hardware suppliers, they are stronger than wooden

shoes and are always used in scenery constructed for travelling.

As a general rule cover only one side of the flats with canvas. If the stage is very small and the resources of the company are restricted, both sides can



be covered; but it will be found very inconvenient and is really not economical in the long run. Revolving panels or odd flats used for special purposes can be covered on both sides.

Good flax canvas should be used. It is economical to buy the best, and to go to a firm that supplies theatrical canvas.

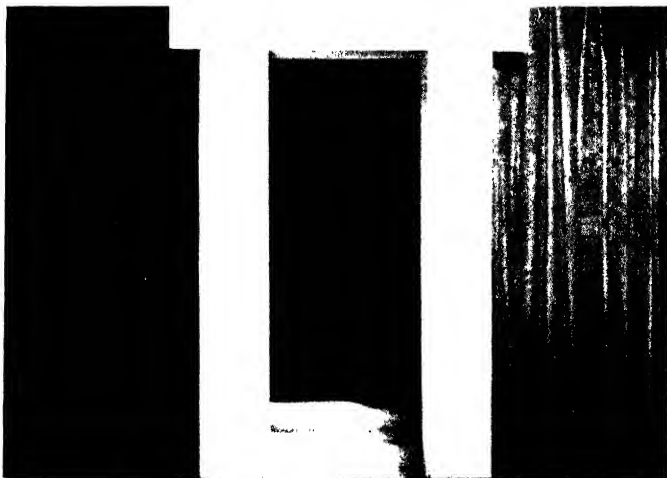


The method of putting the canvas on the flats is as follows: Lay the frame on the floor and tack the canvas at the four corners. Do not cut the canvas yet. Do not drive the tacks right home, merely fix them firmly. Get the selvedge of the canvas a quarter of an inch inside the edge of the frame. Start tacking the canvas on one side of the frame, beginning at the centre and working towards the top, then from the centre to the bottom. Still do not drive the tacks right home, and put the tacks near the inner edges of the frame. Then tack the other side in the same way. Then tack the top, starting from the centre, finally the bottom. As you tack, pull the canvas firmly towards you and stretch it as you go. See that the canvas is taut, without bulges or creases. If there is the slightest crease or unevenness loosen some of the tacks and get it right. When you are perfectly satisfied, cut the canvas a quarter of an inch shorter than the frame all round, turn the edges of the canvas back and glue them down to the frame, rubbing off any glue that squeezes out with a hot swab, then drive the tacks well home. The tacks should be near the inner edges of the frame. The reason for cutting the canvas shorter than the frame is to keep the outer edges of the flats free from canvas so that they will fit well together.  $\frac{5}{8}$ " tacks should be used.

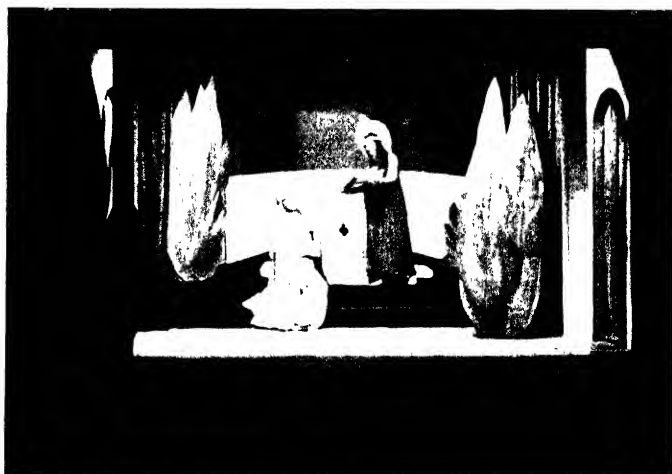
Flats to take windows, doors or fireplaces will have to be specially made, but their construction will be the same as the others. Doors can be made of canvas, or ordinary doors can be fitted instead.

Beaver board and similar compositions are unsuit-





DOORWAY ON APRON STAGE  
Citizen House, Bath



NATIVITY PLAY  
Citizen House, Bath

able for scenery as they are brittle and liable to break off at the edges; it is better to use 3-ply wood; for profile edges profile board is better still.

### (c) *Drop-Cloths*

Stage drop-cloths should be fixed to a batten, top and bottom. The method is to tack the canvas to the top batten keeping it dead level, measure the canvas, then stretch it and tack it to the bottom batten. Sandwich-battens should be used: that is, two battens  $4'' \times \frac{3}{4}''$  bevelled, screwed one on to the other.

Ordinary canvas should be used, and if it has to be sewn it should be joined horizontally.

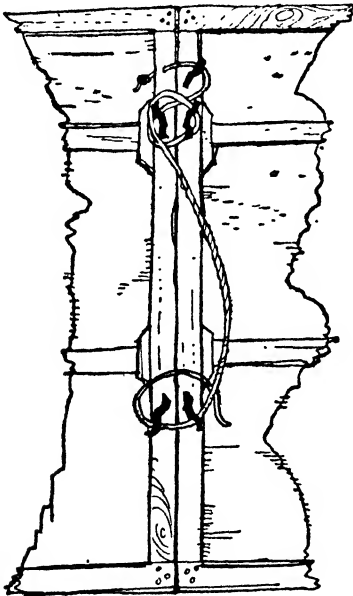
### (d) *Ceilings*

To construct a ceiling, tack canvas to a batten front and back, being careful to get it straight, then have three loose battens one for each side which should be bolted 4'' from each end of the top and bottom battens, the third being bolted across the centre. Turn the canvas over at each side, stretch it taut and tack it temporarily on the back of the end of the battens. It should be primed and distempered in the same way as a stage cloth or flat. By removing the two ends and the centre battens the ceiling can be rolled up when not in use.

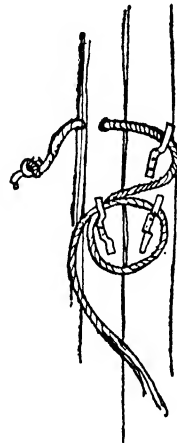
*(e) Scene-Painting*

Before starting scene-painting it is necessary to have a water supply and some means of heating water and keeping it warm.

The canvas, whether on flats or on battens for use as



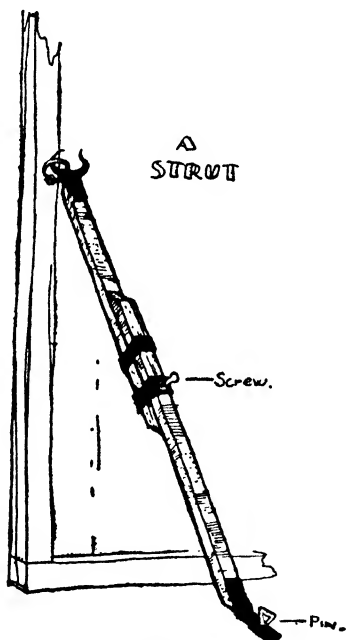
METHOD OF SECURING  
FLATS WITH LINES



DETAIL  
OF  
SAME

stage cloths, should first be primed. Whitening can be used with keg size, putting just sufficient size to hold the whitening, say, 1 lb. of size to a gallon of priming. It should be applied by means of an ordinary 2-tie brush; just sufficient should be used to cover the can-

vas. It should be put on warm, and allowed to dry. When doing flats go right up to the edge of the wood. In an interesting book on "The Continental Method of Scene Painting" (London: C. W. Beaumont,



A STAGE BRACE OR STRUT

1927), Mr. Vladimir Polunin recommends good plain flour in place of whitening, also the use of transparent French glue instead of size. If too much size is used the priming will be liable to crack and the colour fall off. Sufficient priming should be made for the whole flat or cloth to be done in one operation.

Before painting, wait until the priming is quite dry. Use ordinary distemper colours in powder form. If a large space is to be covered with one colour, mix enough in a bucket for the entire job. Use only just sufficient size to keep the colour from rubbing off. In painting, except for large areas, mix the colour into a paste with size, then work from a solution of weak warm size in a bucket, mixing the colour on a palette board.

The brushes to use are: painters' tools for exteriors, flat brushes for interiors, and artists' brushes for detail.

#### *(f) How Scenery Is Supported*

Flats are supported on the stage by extended wooden braces. Bracing eyes are fixed to the flat, into which the top of the brace goes, the feet being screwed to the floor by a special stage-screw, or fitted into a cast iron brace-weight. The timber used for braces is usually ash, 1"  $\times$  1 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". The braces can be made by any carpenter, the tops, clamps and feet being bought from a stage hardware warehouse, or they can be purchased complete. They are usually made to extend 4 feet. Flats are also lashed together at the back by sash-cord thrown over cleats fixed to the flats. The use of these cleats and brace eyes makes it undesirable to use both sides of the flats.

## CHAPTER VIII

### COSTUMES, WIGS, MAKE-UP, ETC.

#### COSTUMES

The dressing of the players comprises the costume and make-up from the head-dress to the feet; nothing less than their total appearance. This in turn is but part of the whole, which includes scenery, properties, and lighting—forming the unity of the production. The designing and selection of costumes must therefore be treated as part of the general design of the play.

Stage costumes have a character of their own, and need to be of a design "cut" and material to suit the stage. They are not made in the same way as clothes for ordinary wear, neither are they fancy dress. The material of which they are made is to be seen not closely but from a distance, and under strong coloured light. The ornament and trimmings must be such as will look well under those conditions; it does not matter how they appear close at hand. This does not mean that they can be carelessly made; but that they have to be made to suit the special conditions of the stage. Knowledge of fabrics, and the effect of light upon them, the ability to cut them well, to get a good fit and to decorate them appropriately is what is required.



Amateur companies should have someone permanently attached to them who will specialise in stage costumes, in their design and making, and in the care of the wardrobe.

Costumes can be hired or they can be made. In plays dressed in the period of the present time it is usual for players to find their own costumes; it is not advisable for a player to wear a suit or dress from his or her own wardrobe unless he or she has not worn it before. A player does not look right, neither does he feel his best, when playing in his ordinary clothes. When players provide their own costumes, the producer must supervise what they wear and give definite instructions on the matter.

It is a sound principle for a company to make its own costumes; for it is not only frequently cheaper to do so than to hire; but greater accuracy, consistency and variety can be got in this way. To go to a costumier and to give an order for costumes for a Shakespearean or other play, accepting what the costumier thinks proper, is a poor way of dressing a play. If it is not possible to design one's own costumes the producer should get from the costumier what he wants after a study of the play and the characters; this, however, means a good deal of trouble, for costumiers have their own ideas, and it is often difficult to get exactly what one wants.

An exception to the principle of making one's own dress is gentlemen's dress of the eighteenth century. This should never be attempted except by a highly experienced tailor who has studied the fashion of the

time. Dress of the eighteenth century, especially gentlemen's dress, was of such rich material and elaborate cut as to demand a perfection of shaping and fitting which is beyond the capacities of amateurs, and indeed of the ordinary tailor.

To design one's own costumes involves provision for making them, and suitable accommodation for storing and handling them; for unless great care is taken of them they rapidly deteriorate. Some costumes need to be put into covers and hung up in a wardrobe, others can be folded and kept in drawers. The preservation of the shape of the costumes must be given particular care. A dry, clean room, with cupboards, or wardrobes; chests of drawers; a large, not too wide, working table; and good daylight as well as artificial light is required. A collection of costume plates and books with illustrations of costumes of all periods should be made and kept in this room. It should be noted that cast-off clothing is often worth keeping.

The main elements in stage costume design are shape, material and colour. The design depends on the character of the play. In plays set in the present day the dressing will be of the period, and the costumes seen every day will be those used on the stage. They must be appropriate to the occasion and the character; for the audience will be able to judge whether the player is correctly dressed or not.

A play requiring dressing in any period but the present is a "costume" play. In doing plays of some years back it is necessary to consider very carefully how the play is to be dressed. Unless the play demands it, the

dressing should be of the present time, for fashions a few years old are uninteresting. The producer must consider to what extent it is practicable to dress a play belonging to recent times. Ibsen, for instance, ought to be dressed in the period, for his plays date: the early plays of Shaw, on the other hand, do not date (as yet) and can be dressed in present fashions.

In all costume plays, recent and historical, the correct costumes of the period of the play must be designed, and producers should take a pride in getting accuracy in this matter. Shakespearean plays offer some latitude in respect of period, and a mixture of periods and places is traditional in staging his works. There is, however, no need to observe this tradition; indeed, the further the producer gets away from tradition in costume as in other things and studies each play he has to do afresh, the better.

A study of historical costume must be made by the serious designer of stage costume. He has to know how to dress royalty, soldiers, churchmen, professional men, merchants, farmers, and peasants of the period to which the play belongs. He has to recognise the characteristic features of the dress of the period worn by both men and women, rich and poor. To do this he must be able to consult illustrated books, and old books, pictures and prints in libraries and galleries. In many museums there are collections of old costumes to be seen. There are many books on costume of all periods, and a number of good books on stage costume; these should form part of the library of every

amateur company. If absolute accuracy in detail cannot be got—and it practically never is—the period can be suggested. It should be remembered, however, that periods usually overlap; there is always a certain number of people who carry over the fashion of one time into another.

Fantastic and non-realistic plays offer unlimited scope to the costume designer. He is tied down to nothing but to the general design of the play; subject to that his fancy has free play. His design can express the spirit of the play studied in the character of each player. The dressing of the play should be considered as a whole, and each character in relation to the others. The dress of the actor should suggest the part.

In designing costumes a knowledge of fabrics and textures, and of colour values is required. Materials must be got that will stand the wear required of them, that can be cut and fitted to the body and that hang correctly. In stage costumes, as in other things on the stage, a cheap material frequently is more effective than an expensive one. If a suitable cheap material of the right colour cannot be got, the material obtainable can sometimes be dyed or painted. All colours are affected by light, and different materials are affected in different ways. Some materials look rich under stage light and other materials do not. The effect of stage lighting on the colours of the dresses and the dress in relation to the scenery must be considered. For instance, strong amber lighting, which is much used, is bad for red, blue and green; light pink lighting improves all colours

except green; the effect of different coloured stage lighting on material should be experimented with, and some surprising results can be secured.

The colours chosen should be appropriate to the character, should harmonise with each other and should provide the necessary contrast.

Head-dress, collars, shirts, and shoes must be given attention, also jewels and other personal ornaments, walking sticks, etc.

Stage lighting shows up defects in the shape and fitting of costumes much more than ordinary daylight. Costumes should therefore fit well and be put on properly. Underclothing should fit closely and not cause bulging or interfere with the lines of the costume. In modern comedy or eighteenth century comedy, or any plays in which smartness and perfection of dressing is of first importance, attention must be given to every detail of the cutting and fitting of costumes. Ladies in particular need to consider everything they put on; the underclothes should be thin and the minimum should be worn; the lines of corsets or other underclothing should not show through; stockings and shoes must fit perfectly.

Ladies wearing crinolines should practice walking and sitting down until they can do these actions with ease and grace.

When tights or trunk hose are worn they must fit tightly, without wrinkles, and be fastened securely so that they do not slip and get out of shape. This of course is in or after the seventeenth century when woven

hose first began to be used; in plays of an earlier period tights should be worn loosely.

Costumes should be ready before the dress rehearsal, and if possible the players should rehearse in them a number of times to get used to them and free themselves from self-consciousness.

### WIGS, ETC.

In naturalistic plays wigs should be avoided, if possible; for nothing is better than the natural hair. In costume plays and all plays requiring heavy make-up it is better to use wigs than the natural hair.

A lot of trouble should be taken with wigs to see that they fit correctly. They should not be ordered at the last moment as they take a considerable time to prepare. If they are not exactly right they should go back to the wig-maker for attention. They should fit the head exactly without danger of moving out of place; in particular they need to fit at the forehead, over the ears, and at the back of the neck; and they should cover up the natural hair.

Crêpe-hair should be used for beards and moustaches, and the same material can be used several times if taken care of. Wired beards should never be used. Short, trimmed beards can be made by the wig-maker, and are often more convenient and effective than crêpe-hair. Crêpe-hair, which is always bought in plaited form, should be wetted, combed out straight and allowed to dry before being used. Moustaches and

beards should normally be somewhat lighter than the natural hair. The tendency of stage lighting is to make the hair seem lighter.

#### MAKE-UP

The make-up proper, that is the treatment of the face, hair and hands, is part of the general make-up, which includes the costumes; but it is in itself an interesting and important study. Every player should know sufficient about it to be able to do his own. In many amateur companies, however, there are players who do not understand it, and the stage-manager or producer should arrange for someone to become proficient in this art so as to be responsible for them.

The amount of make-up depends on the size of the auditorium and the lighting of the play. In a small building without much strong light, slight make-up is sufficient; but in a large building with intense light the make-up will have to be strong. Make-up can be used to define and bring out the features, or to alter them more or less completely; this of course depends upon the part. Make-up differs in straight naturalistic plays and in poetic and imaginative plays. In the latter much more make-up is used. The general rule is to use as little as possible in naturalistic plays and to be elaborate in other plays. It should be remembered that the colour of the stage lighting will affect the make-up, so that players must examine their make-up under the light to be used in the play. If there are no footlights the make-up will be different from what is required when they are used.



THE KING'S' JEWRY — By Halcott Glover  
The Huddersfield Thespians (1928)

*Produced by F. A. Bean*



THE TRAGEDY OF MAN. — By John Masefield  
The Huddersfield Thespians (1927)

*Produced by A. Lunn*





Grease-paint for make-up is manufactured in the form of sticks in a variety of colours. The colours are usually known by number, but the colours of different makes vary slightly and the numbers are not always the same. It is advisable to get a good make of grease-paint for satisfactory results and also for the sake of the skin.

The process of making-up is as follows: Dressing must first be completed, except perhaps for putting on a jacket, or such other part of the costume the putting on of which will not interfere with the make-up. The costume should be protected by an overall or towel to prevent it from getting soiled. Face-cream, grease-paints, spirit-gum, crêpe-hair, face powders, powder puffs, large hare's foot, small camel hair-brushes or orange sticks, comb, scissors, hand-mirror, and a towel for the hands are required. Good towels should not be used as they will get stained; it is better to use some cheap material. The hands should be kept as clean as possible and will need to be frequently wiped. There must be a good-sized wall mirror, and the lighting should be as near as possible that of the play.

Lightly rub the face-cream on to the face, but not the ears, using as little cream as possible. The object of this is to protect the pores of the skin. The face must not be greasy and it is a good practice to wipe the face gently after the cream has been put on. A cold cream for the purpose can be obtained from theatrical cosmetic establishments in large tins; it is much less expensive than the ordinary toilet kinds. Then apply the groundwork, which will depend on the char-

acter, either dark or fair, young or old; this should be applied evenly. Stage lighting, depending, however, on its colour, generally lightens make-up, so that allowance must be made for this; it is important not to finish the ground work abruptly at the jaw but to even it off under the jaw and on to the neck. The mouth, cheeks, chin, eyes, nose, eyebrows, and eyelashes should then be attended to. Lines and hollows should be placed as required; the natural formation of the face should be observed and creases, wrinkles, hollows, etc., either painted out or emphasised. In an aged part, the places where wrinkles, etc., form naturally on the face should be made the basis of the structure of the make-up. Lights and shadows should be emphasised if required. The method is approximately that of the portrait painter, except that the face does not remain in repose and the surface is not a flat one!

Grease-paints should be mixed on the palm of the hand, using as small a quantity as possible. Lining, etc., should be done by means of a stub, orange stick or small brush.

When the grease-painting is finished, the face should be well powdered, putting the powder on gradually, a little at a time, to fix or dry the grease-paint.

If a beard or moustache has to be affixed, it should be done now, wiping off the grease-paint carefully where it is to go, putting on the spirit gum with a brush and then affixing the crêpe-hair. The spirit gum should be allowed to evaporate slightly before the crêpe-hair is affixed, and the crêpe-hair should then be held to the face with the palm of the hand, the

warmth helping to affix it securely. Great attention should be paid to the secure fixing of beards and moustaches; a good quality spirit gum should therefore be got.

Finally the wig should be put on, which should be done from the front backwards. The join of the wig on the forehead should be made satisfactory, and the grease-paint worked over it and the place powdered. If necessary, spirit gum should be used to keep the wig in position.

The hands, arms and neck, the back of the neck and ears should be made up to suit the character. In straight parts, no grease-paint should be put on the ears, but the lobes should be lightly rouged, and the forehead and neck should have the very lightest possible ground work.

The colour of the powder used should be suited to the general colours of the make-up.

Ladies playing straight parts must be careful about make-up as they can easily spoil their appearance. The eyes and shape of the mouth are the most important matters, and the amount of rouge on the cheeks. The make-up should not take all character out of the face, which will be the result if rouge is badly applied.

Eyes must be most carefully made-up, especially by ladies and men in juvenile parts. When footlights are used ladies should colour the eyelids, the exact tint to use to be found by experiment; generally brown can be used for light eyes and dark blue for dark eyes. The grease-paint should be blended on the eyelids, deep on the edges and fading away over the eyeball.

It must not be worked under the eyebrow but the ground colour should remain there.

The shape of the eye can be defined and improved by drawing a very thin line on the edge of the eyelid and under the eye. This must be carefully done.

Men playing juvenile parts can make up their eyes in the same way but using much less paint, indeed no more than a suggestion of it, or they may look doll-like.

A very slight tip of rouge can be placed in the inner corner of the eye-socket.

The eyebrows must be combed and made up to suit the eyes. If there is hair between the eyebrows it should be painted out with the ground colour.

Noses can be altered in shape by using nose-paste or nose-putty, which is sold in sticks like grease-paint. It should be kneaded in the hand until it is soft and put on before applying the grease-paint. It must be moulded with the fingers, care being taken to prevent the join being seen. The ground work for the face should then be put on.

A line of grease-paint lighter than the ground work put on the ridge of the nose from bridge to tip will emphasise it; some similar grease-paint just under the tip of the nose will lengthen it, and a slight touch of rouge just under the tip will shorten it.

Ladies' lips must not have too much rouge; it should finish a little way from the corners to prevent the mouth appearing too wide, be evenly put on, and both sides should be even.

Men playing straight parts can use a little rouge

on the lips, but it should not be put on up to the corners of the mouth unless it is desired to make the mouth appear large.

Some light grease-paint on the chin will strengthen it, and a little rouge on the tip will reduce it.

Proficiency in make-up can only be gained by practice, and players who take their art seriously will give study to this branch of it. They will not leave their make-up to the moment of the dress-rehearsal but will experiment with it beforehand.

In removing make-up, proceed as follows: Take off the wig, from the back forwards. Then take off the costume. Rub face-cream evenly into the face, using plenty of cream, and rubbing the neck as well. Then wipe off with a cloth. If the grease-paint has not entirely come off, do it again. Then powder the face; finally wash in warm water.

Make-up for outdoor performances should be lighter than that for the stage, and pink grease-paints in particular should be avoided.

## MUSIC

Music may be required in the play itself or in the entr'actes. If in the play, it should be done on the stage, unless, of course, the play is a musical play or an opera, or it is being performed in the manner of the nineteenth century with music at the opening and close of each act and at moments of sentiment: then of course the orchestra must be used. In Shakespearean plays, the musicians can be among the actors, and in

other plays that require music, such as Rostand's *The Fantasticks*, the musicians can be put where they form part of the scene.

Some people like incidental music, that is music in the entr'actes; some do not. I do not think there is any question of principle involved, except this, that if there is such music it should form part of the production, and be selected and performed in relation to the play. A small chamber orchestra with instruments of the period for eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century plays can be used with admirable effect.

#### DANCING

Some plays require dancing, or dancing may properly be introduced into them. The dances must be in character with the play, be well rehearsed and staged. A dance instructor should be engaged for the purpose, and it is a good thing for a company to have a permanent dance director.

## CHAPTER IX

### LIGHTING

#### THE PRINCIPLES OF STAGE-LIGHTING

The play is essentially a spectacle, something to be seen, so that lighting of the stage is necessary. The simplest form of lighting is that which enables the audience to see the action. So long as that is done plays are possible and a theatre can exist. The aim in modern stage-lighting is, however, something more than that bare minimum; it is to provide just the intensity, colour and direction of light that a play needs at every moment of its action. In nature there is an infinite variety of light; morning, afternoon, evening, night have different lights; the light of one season of the year differs from another, of one country from another, of one room from another in the same house.

In non-realistic plays the lighting depends not upon the observance of nature but on the imagination of the producer, and what is called psychological lighting can be tried; in such lighting something more is aimed at, namely the expression of the "mood" of the play in each scene. This means that the lighting is not merely dark or light, or warm or cold, but colour is so employed that the emotion created by the play is



conveyed by the movement of light—and its significance intensified.

What, then, is attempted in designing the lighting for a play is to secure visibility for the audience, to convey the time and place of the action, and to express beauty by contrast of light and shade and in the colour of the scene.

### HOW TO GET A WELL LIT SCENE

Many amateur companies have difficulty with their lighting, especially when not working in properly equipped theatres or when they have no stage of their own. It is often impossible for them to rehearse their lighting, and elaborate effects are out of the question. Under these conditions, all that can be aimed at is to get the stage well lit. If that can be done there is no reason to despair; for a well-lit stage in which the players' faces are well seen is sufficient. To get a well-lit scene is the first problem to be tackled. How can it be done?

The amount of light is the first matter to be settled; that depends on the size of the building. A large auditorium requires more light than a small one, and the larger it is the more light is necessary. A small room, or hall, will need just a little more light than normal room-lighting. The amount of light can be ascertained only by experiment. The direction of the light should be from above and in front. A No. 1 batten, that is a row of lights just behind the curtain, throwing light directly on the stage is essential. It can be supplemented

by a light or lighting in the auditorium, on the walls or from the ceiling, suitably screened from the audience and with the light directed on to the stage. If that is not sufficient, footlights should be used; but they can usually be avoided. There must also be lights "off" to illuminate back-cloths, etc. These, again, should be directed mainly from above. As actors' shadows give most trouble on the lower portion of the back-cloth, lighting it from below (behind a ground-row or from a pit) is also important. The sides should be lit as well, if possible.

All lights should have reflectors behind them to increase their efficiency. As a white light is hard and unpleasant, it should be coloured either by using coloured lamps, or by dipping some of the electric lamps in a colouring varnish, or better still fitting the lights into frames in which gelatine slides can be fixed.

The whole of the lighting must be controlled from a switchboard.

The above is the simplest lighting and is practicable in any place in which there is an electric supply. The general principle of such lighting is a diffused light over the whole scene. Care must be taken, however, that the light is concentrated within the proscenium and does not spread outside it.

Shadows cast by the actors or by properties should be looked for and corrected by throwing a light where they fall; but it must be remembered that slight shadows with this simple lighting can hardly be avoided.

## THE ELECTRICIAN

For satisfactory stage-lighting it is necessary to have a competent electrician. A man with working experience of a theatre is desirable, but if he cannot be got an ordinary electrician who is prepared to take an interest in stage lighting should be attached to the company. All the lighting effects should be done through him; if he is intelligent and quick to learn, he can make the simpler apparatus himself. He must, however, be reliable and a conscientious worker, for a good deal will depend upon him.

## LIGHTING EQUIPMENT

Where something more than elementary lighting is possible, an attempt should be made to secure proper lighting equipment. The first principle of such equipment is flexibility, and all apparatus that is got should be selected with that principle in mind. Complete flexibility can only be realised, however, by means of a complicated switchboard, with dimmers, etc.; the more adaptable the lighting, the more complicated the switchboard. All the lights and other apparatus, switchboard, dimmers, etc., can be home-made; but it is better to purchase them from stage-lighting specialists, for though the cost will be more the greater efficiency and reliability of the apparatus is worth it. They usually can also be hired from stage-lighting firms.

Electrical equipment firms that specialise in stage-

lighting issue illustrated catalogues which should be studied.

The *Switchboard* is the most important element in stage-lighting equipment; from it the whole of the stage-lighting should be controlled. It can be constructed as a permanent fixture or be portable. The switchboard can be made by a competent electrician from parts, or it can be purchased from a firm of stage electricians.

The switchboard can be placed on the right or left of the stage. I prefer it on the left, on a platform raised from the floor: the platform is not, of course, necessary with a temporary switchboard.

All fittings for the switchboard and all cable, fuses, switches and plugs should be the best obtainable, and plugs, in particular, should be special stage plugs got from a firm specialising in stage equipment.

*Dimmers* are for regulating the amount of light on the stage, which is done by means of either a metallic or liquid resistance; by these means light can be dimmed and increased by gradual and almost imperceptible changes. They can be home-made or purchased.

A *Batten* is a piece of pipe suspended over the stage and wired for lights. It should be wired in three circuits and, if possible, in three equal sections, in the same way as the floats. The batten can be fitted with permanent housing and reflectors for the lights, or it can be designed to take spot lights or other lanterns. The advantage of the latter method is that the light can be directed to any particular part of the stage. A No. 1 Batten, that is the batten immediately behind

the tabs, is essential, and it should be capable of lighting the entire acting area when clear; if it is intended to use it with lanterns and focus lamps it should be remembered that these take up a fair amount of room which must be allowed for.

*Footlights* or *Floats* are lights at the front on the floor of the stage, outside the tableaux curtains. The lamps are in a metal trough, with reflectors. The lamps should be wired in three circuits, and if possible in three equal sections. When constructing a new stage it is possible to construct the floats in such a way that they can be made to disappear, leaving the stage floor quite flat. I had these floats installed in the Welwyn Theatre and the additional expense is justified. Some producers do not use footlights; but it is advisable to have them as they are often useful. On a temporary stage without footlights there is no need to go to great trouble to erect them as they can be done without; temporary footlights must be properly screened from the audience.

*Flood Lights* are ventilated metal boxes, with a reflector and a wide open front, made in three sizes to take from 100 to 1000 watt lamps.

*Arena Floods* are designed to illuminate large areas; they are suspended from above and take 500 to 1000 watt lamps.

*Acting Area Lamps* are similar to the above, but fitted with a hood to confine the light vertically to a particular part of the stage. These flood lights can be fitted with ground glass diffusing screens, and also with runners to take gelatine colour mediums.

*Focus Lamps* and *Spot Lights* are used for focusing light through a lens upon particular parts of the stage. They are made to take from 100 watt lamps upwards. They have runners for colour mediums.

*Stage Flooding Lanterns* are used for powerful diffused lighting and are operated usually from adjustable stands on the floor or suspended on lines. They take 500 to 1000 watt lamps, and have a diffusing screen and runners for colour mediums.

*Arc-lamps* are for powerful lighting and can be done without except for long throws. They need special wiring and resistances.

*Dips* are small openings or traps cut in the stage floor covered by a metal or wooden flap for plugging in lights.

If a *Cyclorama* forms part of the stage it will require special lighting equipment such as Schwabe lanterns.

Various *Effect* machines can be purchased or hired from stage lighting firms.

*Gelatine Colour Mediums* are inserted in the frames forming part of the various lighting units. They can be purchased from stage lighting specialists in a wide range of colours.

### LIGHTING EFFECTS

When light is employed in a scene as lamplight or in a fire, or when it is used as sunlight, through a window or doorway, or trees, or as moonlight in a forest, or some other place where its rays can be seen,

those rays of light must be the centre of the lighting design. The lighting of the scene must seem to spring from those rays, so that they must not be neutralised by the stage lighting. It will be seldom that those lights in themselves will be sufficient for the scene; light from the fire or lamp, for instance, will cast heavy shadows which may interfere with the action; so that always, with very few exceptions, other light than that which is visible will have to be used; but this light, necessary for the scene, must harmonise with the apparently natural light; and to do this requires much experiment.

The main problem with shadows is to get rid of them, to "kill" them, but their use as part of the lighting scheme should be studied, as they can often be employed with effect; they require, as a rule, powerful lights super-imposed on the normal lighting.

Back-cloths need strong lighting with powerful lamps, to reduce shadows, and the lights from floats and batens should not be allowed to shine directly on them.

Footlights should not be depended upon for intensity of light, for they tend to distort the shapes of furniture and properties and the faces of the actors. They should be used, when at all, for correcting shadows.

Exterior views through a window or door in a scene need very powerful lights, and attention should be given to avoiding shadows from actors passing or entering the openings.

White light used alone gives a hard unpleasant effect which generally needs toning down by the use of gelatine colour mediums, and a stage lit entirely with one





place. The preparation of this lighting-plot is the duty of the producer in consultation with the scenic designer, the stage-manager, and the electrician. It should be prepared as early as possible, thoroughly experimented with, and all necessary alterations made in it prior to the dress rehearsal.

## CHAPTER X

### FINANCE

#### THE TREASURER

The business organization of the amateur stage ought always to be well done. It is the problem of making ends meet. It requires ordinary business ability applied to the control of costs of production and securing the necessary revenue. There is no reason why amateurs should not be completely efficient in this respect. Unfortunately, they sometimes tend to forget finance in their artistic zeal; but it is a mistake.

A business manager, or treasurer, should be appointed. He who should have charge of the finances of an amateur company and should be in control of the finance of each particular production. An estimate of the probable cost of each production and the front of the house costs should be prepared beforehand, together with an estimate of probable receipts. As soon as possible after a production has taken place the treasurer should prepare a detailed report upon the financial results.

#### COSTS OF PRODUCTION

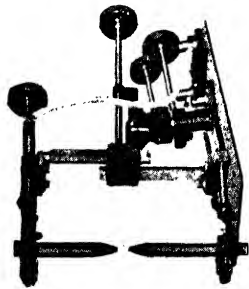
The costs of production must necessarily be estimated in consultation with the producer. They will include the following items:

- (a) Author's fees.
- (b) Scenery.
- (c) Properties.
- (d) Lighting.
- (e) Costumes.
- (f) Stage Assistance.
- (g) Stage or room hire for rehearsals.

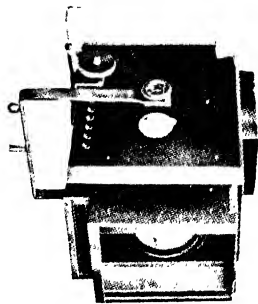
There is no need to deal in detail with any of the above items, with the exception of author's fees which will be mentioned later on. Obviously what is spent will have to depend upon probable receipts. The latter should be very carefully ascertained, either from past experience or from information that can be trusted. Unless there is a guarantee fund or a membership that can be relied upon or some other certain source of income, every production is bound to possess a certain element of risk. It is impossible to tell whether a play will draw or not. Therefore an element of caution should be observed. There should be a definite understanding with the producer as to the total amount to be spent before a decision is taken upon the play, otherwise the producer will be left to his own resources, and there is hardly any limit to what a play can cost.

It was the almost invariable custom at one time for "amateur theatricals" to be performed for charity, usually as a means of securing an audience. Practically all companies, however, that take their playing seriously, do not now perform for charity, but for the support of their own work. Serious dramatic effort is not indeed in harmony with the atmosphere and requirements of charity performances, and amateur players should avoid allowing themselves to be used

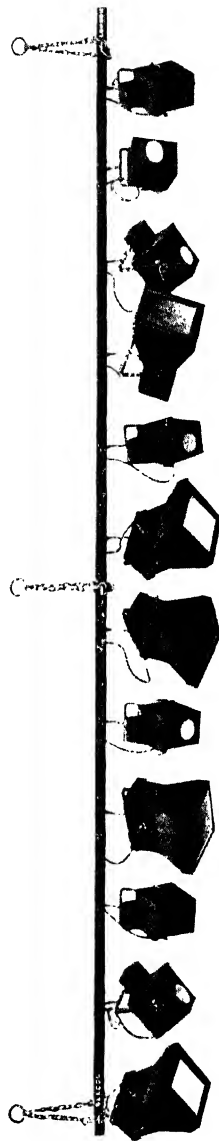




A SPOTTING ARC LAMP  
Used from "front of the house"



A FOCUSING LANTERN



A LIGHTING BATTEN WITH SPOT-LIGHTS AND FLOOD-LANTERNS  
These can be adjusted to any angle to light any portion of the stage as required

for such purposes. The funds of a dramatic company should be used for theatrical purposes, for the support of their own or other theatrical enterprises. There is never too much money for such things.

### DRAMATIC, COPYRIGHT AND AUTHOR'S FEES

Author's fees are payable on all copyright plays, unless the author waives them voluntarily. No play should be performed without first making a definite arrangement with the author or his agent. Some plays are not available in certain districts owing to a prior agreement with the author, and whether the play is available should be ascertained before deciding to perform it. In England, under the Copyright Act, 1911, an author of a play possesses the exclusive performing rights in his plays for the length of his life and his legatees for fifty years after. An author can, of course, dispose of his rights either absolutely or for a period or in a particular area, in the same way as he can of other property, and the copyright in a play may therefore belong to some other person than the author. No copyright play may be performed in public, in whole or in part, without the license of the owner of the copyright. There is no difference in this respect between performances by amateurs or professionals.

Anyone who takes part in an unauthorized performance of a play either as actor, producer, or organizer of the performance, is liable to be proceeded against for the unpaid fee and for damages.

Amateurs who perform plays without consent are taking property that does not belong to them.

What is a "public performance" is a matter of some doubt. A play given in a private house before the guests of the owner is a private performance and no license is required. But the dividing line between a private and a public performance is very thin, and a performance in a private house may become a public performance. The question is a matter of fact in each case. The fact that no charge is made for admission, or that it is given before the members of a Society, or that the performance does not take place in a theatre does not make it a private performance.

In America similar conditions apply. The law reads as follows:

Any person publicly performing or representing any dramatic or musical composition for which copyright has been obtained, without the consent of the proprietor of said dramatic or musical composition, or his heirs or assigns, shall be liable for damages thereof, such damages in all cases to be assessed at such sum, not less than 100 dollars for the first and 50 dollars for every subsequent performance as to the court shall appear to be just. If the unlawful performance be wilful and for profit, such person or persons shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and upon conviction shall be imprisoned for a period not exceeding one year. Section 4966. *U. S. Revised Statutes: Table 60, Chap. 3.*

It is the custom for authors to distinguish between amateur and professional performances and often to employ different agents for the two kinds of performances. Professional performances are usually licensed on a royalty basis, that is on a percentage of

the gross receipts, per performance, or per week. Amateurs are usually charged a fixed fee per performance, which varies from £3 3 0 (15 dollars), to £5 5 0 (25 dollars) per performance for full length plays, and from 10/6 (3 dollars) to £2 2 0 (10 dollars) for one-act plays. When plays are given for two or more consecutive performances it is customary to reduce the fee for performances after the first. Some authors allow their plays to be performed by amateurs, under certain conditions, on a royalty basis.

Mr. Bernard Shaw was one of the first authors to permit amateurs to perform his plays on a royalty basis. If an amateur company wrote to him in the ordinary way for permission to perform a play, Mr. Shaw's practice was to refer them to his agent. If, however, the company in making its application showed that it devoted the proceeds of its performances to its own dramatic work, Mr. Shaw was (and is) willing to give them permission to perform his plays on the same terms as professionals. Mr. Shaw used to send a memorandum to his correspondents on this subject, which read as follows:

Playwrights often receive letters asking them to authorize performances of their plays by Societies formed to develop appreciation of dramatic art in their neighbourhood. These Societies are sometimes University, Y. M. C. A., Labour College, or Polytechnic Clubs; sometimes branches of Drama Leagues; sometimes isolated ventures calling themselves by any title which occurs to them. As a rule, they all make the same mistake. They appeal for special consideration on the ground that they are personally disinterested and actuated solely by public spirit; that they are poor; that all work con-



nected with them is unpaid; and that, if they make any money, they give it away to charities, to political organisations of one sort or another, or to some public object unconnected with the theatre. The result is that the playwright is obliged to class them as "amateurs," and refer them to the Collection Bureau of the Society of Authors, which is in turn, obliged to make them pay five guineas a performance, and to forbid them to give more than two performances consecutively. The next day an ordinary commercial speculator, who has no other purpose than to make money for himself, will receive from the same playwright, or from the Society, without question, an authorization to perform night after night for a shilling in the pound on the takings when these do not exceed £50.

For this the Societies have themselves to thank. If they would organize themselves as continuing bodies building up a capital fund by the profits of their performances; appoint a responsible director, pay everybody a living wage as soon as they have the means; and aim at the foundation of a permanent series of performances every season under a standing title (Blanktown Repertory Theatre, or something of the kind) in, if possible, a theatre of their own, they could at once obtain authorization of professional terms, exactly as the commercial speculators do. It is their own thoughtless protests that they are doing nothing more than the amateur dramatic clubs do, that is acting for the fun of it, and giving away all the money they make to objects unconnected with the theatre, that forces the playwright, as a matter of professional etiquette, to class them with the amateur clubs and make them pay the same fees.

The remedy is in their own hands. No sane playwright wants to discriminate against *bona fide* attempts to educate the people in dramatic art: on the contrary, he wants to encourage them by every means in his power. Societies devoted to this object are clearly entitled to go into the play market exactly as the trustees of a picture gallery go into the picture market, or a public library into the book market. But they must constitute and describe themselves accordingly, and not insist on being idle amateurs.

## "FRONT OF THE HOUSE" COSTS

Among other costs are:

- (a) Hire of Theatre.
- (b) Advertising in newspapers.
- (c) Printing and distribution of circulars.
- (d) Printing and posting of posters.
- (e) Printing tickets.
- (f) Programmes.

These costs can all be ascertained and approximately estimated beforehand.

The cost of the hire of the theatre, or hall, in which the performances are given depends entirely upon local conditions. Sometimes a theatre proprietor will require a certain percentage of the gross receipts instead of a fixed hiring charge, and sometimes he will include certain services, such as stage assistance, stewards, or bill posting.

Attention should be given to the comfort of the audience at the performances. There should be sufficient attendants to show people to their seats, and they should know their duties thoroughly. If members of the society do this work they should undertake to be present at least half an hour before the doors are open to receive their instructions and become familiar with the part of the auditorium for which they are responsible.

The box-office should be properly staffed for taking money and issuing tickets. There should be ticket checkers at all entrances who thoroughly understand what they have to do and can direct the public to their proper entrances.

## PUBLICITY

It is a good plan to appoint some one to be responsible for all the printed matter and publicity in connection with a production. Every effort should be made to secure the interest of the public for whom the play is being given. Paragraphs should be sent to the press some weeks beforehand and information should be supplied to the press continually up to the date of the first performance. Circulars should be printed and sent widely to all who may possibly be interested, either by hand or through the post. There should be good posters. Advertisements should be inserted in the papers. All the printing should be done attractively and with style. Everything should be done to arouse anticipation among the public.

The matter for programmes should be prepared well in advance, and the programmes should be made attractive by containing not only a list of the characters in the play, but notes on the play and the author, also on costumes or other matters connected with the play. They should also contain full information of the activities of the society responsible for the production.

## THE CHARGE FOR ADMISSION

The charge made for admission to amateur performances depends upon local conditions. Some amateur companies in the North of England and London make no charge at all, and rely upon collections taken from the audience. Others make a very small charge, sometimes as low as 3d. Such companies

cannot, unless they are supported from outside sources, expend much money on their productions. The object of such work is to appeal to audiences that cannot or will not, for one reason or another, go to the regular theatre. The performances are often well done and are almost invariably very popular. They must, however, be regarded as exceptional. Good work can be done at small cost, and much money is often wasted by amateurs (as by professionals) on their productions for want of sufficient care and forethought. But an adequate economic basis for amateur stage work must be established if it is to be permanent. This means a reliable source of revenue, and the sale of seats at reasonable prices ultimately involves the building up of an audience willing to pay for what it receives. This is not to argue against the support of the amateur stage by rich patrons or by public authorities; for financial backing enables more and better work to be done. It does, however, mean that that stage must deserve the support of those who are able to pay for it. Mr. Nugent Monck, the director of the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich, said in his statement to the Adult Education Committee of the Board of Education (from which I have already quoted) :

The theatre paid its way. He thought it essential to live on the box office as it prevented him from becoming too high-brow. There were no subscriptions, but a few faithful people gave guarantees against ultimate loss. He thought that there were about 500 people who could be relied upon to turn up at every show. The prices charged were 5/-, 3/6, 2/4 and 1/6. The audience was drawn in the main from the lower middle class, and the cheaper seats were full of the younger generation of artisans.

The above is a good statement of financial policy for the observance of amateurs generally.

The Leeds Civic Playhouse admits the public to its performances free, expenses being met by voluntary contributions of the audience to a collection taken during the performances, and by a grant from the Carnegie Trustees of £250 a year for three years from 1927. Each production runs for two weeks in a hall seating about 1,000, and large numbers of people are usually turned away. There is a system by which certain seats can be reserved on purchase of a 5/- ticket, which entitles the holder to reserve ten seats during the season. In 1927/1928 the number of ticket holders was 23,000.

Amateur companies ought to aim at securing a large subscribing membership. This can be done in various ways. A small subscription may entitle persons to become members of the Society or Club, with the privilege of obtaining tickets for performances at a reduced price. Or subscriptions may be offered for season tickets for a series of performances throughout a season at prices which show a reduction upon those charged for a single performance. Anything that will get together a body of supporters among the public is worth doing.

The number of performances to be given depends upon the popularity of the play and the company giving it. The more performances the better for the actors, providing the audiences can be got. This is largely a matter of finance, and business management and attention can very usefully be given to it from that point of view.

## AN EXAMPLE OF AN AMATEUR COMPANY'S FINANCE

As an example of the finances of an amateur company the Huddersfield Thespians may be taken. Huddersfield is a town of 110,000 inhabitants in Yorkshire, England. The Thespians were established in 1920 with the object among others of performing dramatic works and establishing a Little Theatre. 253 performances of 64 plays have been given to the end of the 1927/1928 season, usually in a hall hired for the purpose, occasionally in the theatre.

There are 294 subscribing members paying one guinea each per annum, who receive one ticket for each of the society's productions at Huddersfield without further payment, and 182 members who pay an entrance fee of 1/-, a subscription of 5/- per annum and pay for their tickets in the ordinary way.

The society gave six productions in the season from October, 1927 to March, 1928, each with four performances.

*Berkeley Square*, by John L. Balderstone and J. C. Squire.

*The Tragedy of Nan*, by John Masefield.

*The Rising Sun*, by Herman Heijermans.

*Magic*, by G. K. Chesterton; and *Mr. Sampson*, by Charles Lee.

*A Night at an Inn*, by Lord Dunsany; and *Wife to a Famous Man*, by G. Martinez Sierra.

*The King's Jewry*, by Halcott Glover.

The last production was a first performance of the play. The following is a statement of the receipts and expenditure for each of the productions:

Receipts	Berkeley Square		Tragedy of Nan		Rising Sun		Magic		Wife to a Famous Man		King's Jewry		Totals	
	£	s d	£	s d	£	s d	£	s d	£	s d	£	s d	£	s d
Cash takings at doors.....	59	19 0	54	13 0	34	3 8	51	1 10	56	15 10	36	0 6	285	13 10
Subscribers' coupons exchanged.....	29	19 8	31	14 8	28	18 8	32	8 8	30	13 8	29	8 0	183	3 4
Bookings at agents.....	63	11 8	58	2 0	45	0 8	56	7 0	49	9 4	34	15 4	307	6 0
Sale of chocolates.....	6	18 2	7	9 0	5	12 6	8	2 1	7	1 1	5	18 2	41	1 0
Programmes.....	6	9 0	6	8 7	4	12 1	5	16 2	6	0 2	4	13 9	33	19 9
	159	17 6	158	7 3	118	7 7	153	15 9	150	0 1	110	15 9	851	3 11
Payments														
Hire of hall, licences and insurance.....	21	15 6	22	10 3	21	15 6	21	15 6	23	14 0	21	15 6	133	6 3
Caretaker, refreshments.....	4	13 0	4	10 0	4	10 0	4	10 0	4	10 0	4	10 0	27	3 0
Royalties.....	10	1 4	12	7 10	8	0 0	16	4 0	10	4 0	7	0 0	63	17 2
Entertainment tax stamps.....	20	18 0	20	10 3	15	7 7	19	17 8	19	9 7	14	4 9	110	7 10
Printing and advertising.....	13	3 9	12	12 0	10	0 3	11	6 7	12	0 2	12	2 10	71	14 7
Properties and settings.....	44	13 11	19	8 9	8	15 4	18	6 10	9	19 9	62	2 3	103	6 10
Stage, business-manager's and producer's expenses.....	4	7 11	3	14 0	3	16 4	6	3 7	4	8 1	3	10 0	25	19 11
Agents' commission on sale of tickets.....	4	2 2	3	18 0	3	2 8	3	17 4	3	10 2	2	17 8	21	8 0
Carriage.....	5	0 0	3	17 7	3	5 10	5	2 6	4	3 2	7	18 10	29	7 11
Typing.....	4	12 6	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	4	12 6
Chocolates.....	5	2 7	5	10 6	4	3 11	6	4 9	5	7 11	4	10 4	31	0 0
Programmes.....	3	1 0	3	5 0	3	17 6	2	13 6	2	9 6	2	6 6	17	13 0
	141	11 8	112	4 2	87	3 11	116	2 3	99	16 4	142	18 8	699	17 0

The society started the season with an adverse balance of £5 2 3, and finished with a balance in hand of £173 12 2, one half of which was placed to the "Building Fund" Account for the hoped-for theatre. The complete summary of accounts for the season is as follows:

## RECEIPTS

	£	s	d	£	s	d
Subscribers .....	308	1	6			
Ordinary Members' Subscriptions	36	8	0			
	<u>344</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>			
Less coupons used by Subscribers and Credited to Production Receipts .....	183	3	4	161	6	2
Receipts from Productions.....				851	3	11
Tours—Young Imeson .....	35	1	0			
Sale of Reports and Books .....	1	13	8			
Fees received for Loan of "Fit up" .....	14	14	0			
Loan of Costumes.....	1	10	0			
Fees received for books borrowed		12	6			
Donation .....		1	6			
Bank Interest .....		7	6	54	0	2
				<u>£1066</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>3</u>



## PAYMENTS

	£	s	d	£	s	d
Expenditure on Productions . . . .				699	17	0
General Properties . . . . .				21	4	5
Rent, Rates, Fuel and Light . . . .	52	0	4			
General Printing and Stationery . .	36	8	6			
Postages and Petty Cash . . . . .	17	8	5			
Subscriptions . . . . .	6	6	0			
Headquarters Furniture . . . . .	3	8	6			
Drama League Competition . . . .	10	10	8			
Tours—Young Imeson . . . . .	24	19	6			
Delegation Expenses . . . . .	5	15	6			
Books and Library . . . . .	7	6	6			
Insurance . . . . .	1	8	0			
Sundries, Including Carriage of "Fit up" . . . . .	1	2	6	166	14	5
				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
				887	15	10
Balance at commencement of Season . . . . .				5	2	3
Balance on General Account 17/5/28 . . . . .	86	16	1			
Balance forward to Building Fund . . . . .	86	16	1	173	12	2
				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
				£1066	10	3
				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

During the season the committee "aimed at the cutting out of all unnecessary and even of some necessary expenditure so as to put the society in a financially sound position. . . . This necessitated a ruling that no money should be expended without the consent of the Finance & Management Sub-Committee, and that a very careful scrutiny of accounts should take place after each production." The policy adopted was, it seems, successful. The society rents a workshop for storing and making scenery.

## MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

There are a few miscellaneous matters. (1) It should be remembered that buildings have to be licensed for stage plays in Great Britain. (2) Plays have to be licensed by the Lord Chamberlain. (3) The Entertainment Tax must be paid on all tickets sold or other consideration for admission to performances. (4) Fire regulations made by the local authority must be observed.

CHAPTER XI  
THE AUDIENCE

THE PUBLIC MUST BE WON

In the actual performance in the theatre the audience plays a part and must therefore be considered as seriously as any other element in theatrical representation. The nature and number of the audience, its likes and dislikes, the extent to which it has to be won over, have all to be taken into account. When the play is chosen the audience to which it is intended to appeal must be remembered; during rehearsals the presence of the audience must be borne in mind, and at performances everything must be done to commend the play to its favour.

It is a disastrous mistake for amateur companies to concentrate on their work to such an extent that the audience is ignored. As I have remarked in an earlier chapter, the audience must not be allowed to become master, it must not be permitted to lead the players. In a real sense, of course, the audience is the final judge upon all work presented for its approbation, and unless players can win its appeal and support they cannot for long continue their work; but it should never be allowed consciously and expressly to dominate

the policy of the players. The players should lead the public.

But the public must be won. Every effort must be made to stimulate their interest, to appeal for their support, to cultivate their understanding of what is done. In the first place, as I have suggested, the public taste must not be ignored. It is not a matter merely of giving the public what it wants; but of giving it consideration. Amateurs can afford to be venturesome. They can take risks for they have not their livelihood at stake; but all the same they must not offend their public or they will multiply difficulties for themselves. The best rule is, I suppose, to have a standard of one's own and the courage of one's own convictions, remembering at the same time the duty that is owed to the audience.

### THE POWER OF SUGGESTION

In the second place the public must be informed of what is being done. It must not be left to discover everything for itself. There must, that is to say, be an element of showmanship in presenting work to it. This need not, and indeed must not, be overdone or even obtrusive. But the audience as an integral part of the play must be prepared beforehand. When people go to the theatre to see a great player they expect to be thrilled and entertained. They are subject to the power of suggestion through the fact that the name of the player has been made known to them by advertisement or reputation, and the circumstances in which

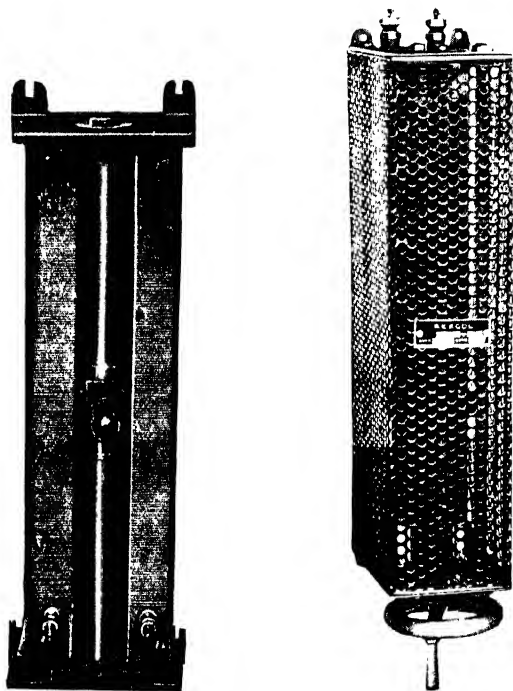
they witness the performance are those of excitement and expectancy. This is a great asset to the player, re-acts on him and stimulates him to the highest endeavour.

Amateur players should not despise the power of suggestion. It can be used to their advantage; unfortunately, it often acts adversely upon them; for the audience sometimes expects little and is apt to overlook merit. If the audience can be got to expect much, which is not difficult so long as they are not already antagonized by previous disappointment, it is a great help to the play.

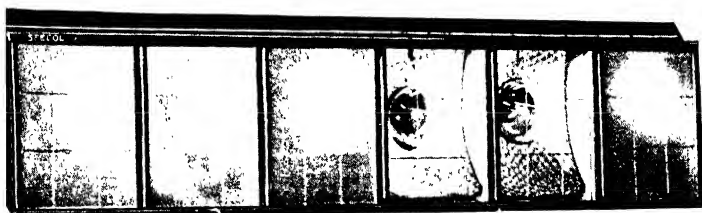
#### NO TWO AUDIENCES ALIKE

The audience definitely contributes to the success of a play, creating the atmosphere in which it is given and bringing the stage to life. All actors know this. A rehearsal and a performance are different in their nature, because although the same words may be spoken on the same stage, when the audience is present a powerful new element is introduced. New and inexperienced players should be told of the effect of the audience and not to fear it. Only before the audience and with its co-operation is acting possible.

No two audiences, even from the same community in the same theatre for the same play, are alike. That is one of the thrills of the stage. It explains why actors can keep fresh in long runs on the professional stage. Audiences differ from night to night, some being helpful, others indifferent, others hostile; they can be en-



TYPES OF METALLIC DIMMERS



SECTION OF A FLOAT, OR FOOTLIGHTS, SHOWING LAMPS WITH REFLECTORS AND GELATINE COLOUR MEDIUMS



couraging, intelligent, stupid or heavy. They can make the work of the players easy or extremely difficult.

### MAKE YOUR OWN AUDIENCE

An audience that has been cultivated by a particular company is a valuable asset to it. That is why a company with a theatre of its own is in a strong position. The public associates the building and the play with its memories of pleasure. This is not so easy when a theatre has to be hired or is used by a number of different companies each with its own standard. Then the audience has largely to be made up each time afresh, and as an audience can easily be spoiled, it is often an up-hill task. Mr. Nugent Monck refers to the performances of Greek plays at his Maddermarket Theatre, as "having a good effect in inducing in the audience a sense of style." The remark is interesting. A sense of style helps to make a theatre and to keep an audience.

Nothing does so much harm to the audiences for the amateur theatre as incompetent work. It tends to disgust them, and to drive them from the theatre. Therefore all amateur companies should strive towards efficient, sincere and sound production of good plays in the interests of amateur playing in general.

### THE USE OF THE PROGRAMME

The use of the programme in helping to build up the audience has been mentioned in an earlier chapter. The programme should contain a producer's note; an



account of the play and the author; a description of the costumes; an explanation of the work and aims of the company; all of which are helpful in creating an atmosphere. Merely to give a list of the characters and the scene of the play is to miss an opportunity of working up the interest of the public. An example of a producer's note is that by Sir Nigel Playfair in the Lyric Theatre Programme for the production of *She Stoops to Conquer*, in August, 1928. He says:

I have set my face against all gags, however time-excused, nor have I paid much attention to traditional "business." The words you will hear in the play are Goldsmith's.

The song sung by Miss Hardcastle was written by Goldsmith, and it was only omitted, as James Boswell tells us, because Mrs. Bulkley was not a vocalist, and to Boswell we owe its preservation. Whether I have placed it correctly I can only hope to have guessed aright, as the text gives no indication.

The author of the Epilogue was Goldsmith's great friend, Cradock. It "came too late for the first performance," and it is possible, and even likely, that it has remained unspoken until now, though, in my humble opinion, it is apter for its purpose than that other epilogue composed in a hurry by Goldsmith himself to take its place.

The prologue, also, I believe, seldom spoken, is by David Garrick.

The Old Vic, London, the centre of popular Shakespearean performances and Opera, issues a monthly journal, "The Old Vic Magazine," which is sold to the audience with the programme. In this journal notes on the operas and the plays are given, with reviews of the work of the theatre. An extract from Mr. Andrew Leigh's note on the play with which the 1928 season

opened, *Love's Labour's Lost*, written, it will be remembered for a "popular" audience, is a specimen of what it contains:

*Love's Labour's Lost*, a delightful, difficult, fantastic comedy of manners, as typical of a particular period as the *Beggars' Opera* or *Patience*, as artificial as either, almost as lyrical and much more poetic. One can hardly realise it is from the same pen that wrote *King Lear*. Tragedy is for all time; comedy, generally speaking, but for an age. Nothing becomes obsolete sooner than a jest. Who will laugh to-day at the reference to bananas that we found so amusing a year ago? In a hundred years' time, who will believe that anyone could ever have laughed at them? Glance through an early volume of *Punch* and see how many of the jokes have a meaning for us to-day. Half the fun in *Love's Labour's Lost* consists of verbal quibbles that it is almost impossible to "get over" because English pronunciation has changed since the sixteenth century. We do not now pronounce "ship" like "sheep" or "suitor" like "shooter," and so these puns fall lamentably flat.

The other half of the fun lies in the caricaturing of affected manners, especially as personified in Armado, the ridiculous foreigner, always a source of delight, especially if he chance to be an enemy. The Spanish Armada was defeated in 1588. England was at loggerheads with Spain. Peele therefore could not write his *Edward the First* without cruelly slandering the memory of Queen Eleanor of Castille. Shakespeare turned the more delicate weapon of satire upon the Spaniards in this play and *The Merchant of Venice*. Towards the close of the poet's career, King James was considering a Spanish alliance, so we get a fair and gracious portrait of Katherine of Aragon. Court poets must go with the times.

Apart from its verbal elegances and extravagances, *Love's Labour's Lost* is interesting as a picture gallery of types. The pedant, the braggart, the hedge-priest, the fool and the boy are like characters from the Italian Comedia. The Princess must surely be Shakespeare's impression of Elizabeth herself and Rosaline is the Dark Lady (be her name Fitton or what you will) not only of the *Sonnets*, but of *Romeo and Juliet*.

How unfashionable it was to be a gipsy beauty in the reign of a red-haired Queen, we can gather from the ungallant remarks of Biron's companions when he attempts to defend his lady-love's complexion. Elizabethan gentlemen preferred blondes.

In addition to explanation, an address to the audience may well be given in the programme. I placed the following note on the programme at the Welwyn Theatre:

The Welwyn Theatre is conducted as one of the town's chief social centres.

The Theatre exists for everyone. Everyone should regard himself or herself as at home in it.

We give equal attention to the comfort of all our patrons.

We invite you to enjoy what we provide for you and to use the Theatre with the respect you feel for your own homes.

Any suggestions will be gladly considered by the management.

Mr. Terence Gray at the Festival Theatre, Cambridge (which is not an amateur theatre), issues a weekly Magazine-Programme with illustrations and criticisms of the plays and the methods of production at the theatre. His address to the audience is as follows:

You are welcome to smoke your pipe.

The supreme desire of the Management is to see you enjoying yourself.

The Management hopes that those who prefer to arrive late will do so without being made to feel uncomfortable. Special seats have been installed for late-comers, in which the play that is in progress can be seen and heard in comfort without disturbing the rest of the audience until the first interval.

There are no rules and regulations in the Festival Theatre.

In so far as time permits, a welcome will be extended to any persons interested in stage craft who care to visit us, except during performances.

The organization of the Festival Theatre is at the disposal of all amateur societies who care to avail themselves of any assistance that we can give.

The advice of our staff is ungrudgingly offered to all who care to ask.

The Festival Theatre exists for the furtherance of the artistic life of Cambridge. The more freely the public makes use of such facilities as we can offer the more fully shall we be able to justify our existence.

Any member of the audience wishing to see any play a second time can do so free of charge, providing seating accommodation is available, by signing his ticket in duplicate at the box office at the end of the performance.

Mr. Gray wrote a note explaining this unusual offer of a free ticket for a second visit to a play, in one of his programmes from which I take the following extract:

There is an absurd idea current that it is sufficient to see a play once in order to be able to judge it. Actually it is rarely possible to do more than gauge the bare outlines of a play at one seeing. I refer, of course, only to work that is definitely on the plane of art; plays whose only aim is the diversion of the public, theatrical bismuth for the overfed, can often be gauged by a glance at the face of the manager. People who buy pictures and know that an interesting work must often hang on their walls, where they see it every day for several weeks, before they attain a full realisation of its content and its message to their minds, will decline an invitation to see a play a second time. They have seen it. To see the same play again would be unutterably boring. Probably it would indeed, but it is likely that is because they have never seen a play at all. They have never seen more than the outlines of a play,

and they think that is all a play is. But then there are thousands of people to whom a picture is just a decorative mess, and to whom music is just a pleasant or unpleasant noise. It would probably be a revelation to them if circumstances ever obliged them really to see a play. In this theatre I often see a play every day in rehearsal, I see it on the first night, I see it again and again, I understand it better and better, I see more and more in it, I enjoy it more and more every day and, towards the end of the week, although I have a mass of pressing matters to attend to. . . . I prefer to leave them to the midnight hours rather than miss reaching a full understanding of the message of that play. It is a realisation of this fact, obvious in itself to those who stop to think, that led to the adoption of the privilege we give the Cambridge public of coming to our plays each week as often as they can find seats, without asking them to pay for more than the first visit.

The object of this attempt by Mr. Gray is to build up an audience giving regular support to the theatre. Such an audience is of more importance to the theatre than a crowd of casual people; it can create atmosphere, and help the actors, and so bring out the full power and beauty of the play.

#### THE IDEAL AUDIENCE

The theatre depends for its progress and development upon critical public attention as much as it does upon competence and imagination in those who work upon the stage. To gain a lively and appreciative audience for its work should be the aim of every amateur company. In the next chapter I shall touch upon the uses of criticism; I may say here that it is part of the function of the critic to train the audience, to make their appreciation of the play more intelligent;

for an audience that understands what is taking place on the stage, not merely the action of the play but the spirit of the thing that is being created, is what the theatre needs. Amateurs can help to make this audience when they work sincerely, which is to work with all their powers.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE USES OF CRITICISM

#### THE NEED FOR INFORMED CRITICISM

No art can live without criticism, without, that is, discriminating appreciation. The theatre being, above all, a popular art, depends upon public attention and understanding. The function of criticism is to distinguish between good and bad work, to explain the qualities of the one and the defects of the other, thus helping to form public taste; further, it has the function of keeping the worker in the theatre up to the mark, so that he gives always of his best, and should provide him with the opportunity of testing and analysing his work.

Theatrical criticism unfortunately seems to be a pursuit for which lack of training and the absence of the elements of technical knowledge are no disqualification. In connection with the practice of no other art could a critic announce that he knows nothing of it and be listened to; yet dramatic critics do not hesitate to reveal their ignorance of the theatre, and still write with assurance about the play. The editors and the public endure this because, perhaps, everyone considers himself or herself competent to express criticism of

plays and acting, and the necessity for technical equipment is not felt. In most of us there is something of the actor, and that no doubt explains this curious situation. For it is a curious thing, and a cause of great harm to the theatre. In all other arts, in music, painting, sculpture, and literature, there are cultivated and accomplished critics who have made a study of their subject; their criticism is therefore of importance. The chief theatrical critic in England is a man whose judgment of plays is uncertain; he is read because he is a great journalist and an entertaining writer. Many lesser critics imitate him without being entertaining.

The lamentable consequence is that the public goes uninformed and without guidance; and the players, producers and authors, largely without the application to their work of critical standards, are subject to the single test of capricious popular success. This cannot but be bad for the theatre.

Does it, for instance, help the theatre when a young actress who has happened to make a success in a particular part is followed in her succeeding work by the adulations of critics, though nothing but the fatness of her parts and the efforts of the publicity agents sustain her? It does not help the actress, except for her brief day; it damages the theatre in the eyes of discriminating people, and lowers its standards among the public generally.

What is required, if I may take it upon myself to say so, is a body of critics who know something of stage production and acting; who can recognize good work when they see it, and explain in what its merit lies; who



can pass judgment upon careless and indifferent work and make the public and the workers in the theatre conscious of shortcomings. They cannot escape from journalism, for that is the condition under which their work must be done, and they must be entertaining; but they can also be critics of the theatre conscious of their responsibilities to the artists who work in it and to the public.

The significance of the great interest now taken by amateurs in production of plays, acting and the theatre in general, is that it is creating a public that really knows something about the theatre, and is able to exercise to an increasing extent an instructed critical faculty. This may prove to be of enormous service to the theatre within a short time. Merely in the hope that it may, there is a sufficient justification (if such be needed) for serious attention being given to the new amateur dramatic movement. There are certainly no more enthusiastic playgoers than amateur players, and with the improved standards of production which they themselves now practice there can be no better critics. They will create a leaven of critical appreciation of the theatre that will spread through society.

#### THE CRITICISM THAT AMATEURS REQUIRE

Amateurs themselves are painfully conscious of the absence of good criticism. They rarely get any criticism of their own work which they can respect or that is of any use to them. They are flattered by their friends and even politely treated by their enemies; plain

criticism, it seems, is not supposed to be good form. The newspaper criticism to which they are subjected is not taken seriously even by those who write it; it is usually composed of fulsome praise, or carping fault-finding equally indiscriminating and ignorant. Yet amateurs need criticism, and all of them who take their work seriously are anxious for it. In the British Drama League competitions the competing companies look for the oral public criticism of their playing as one of the most important results of the competitions.

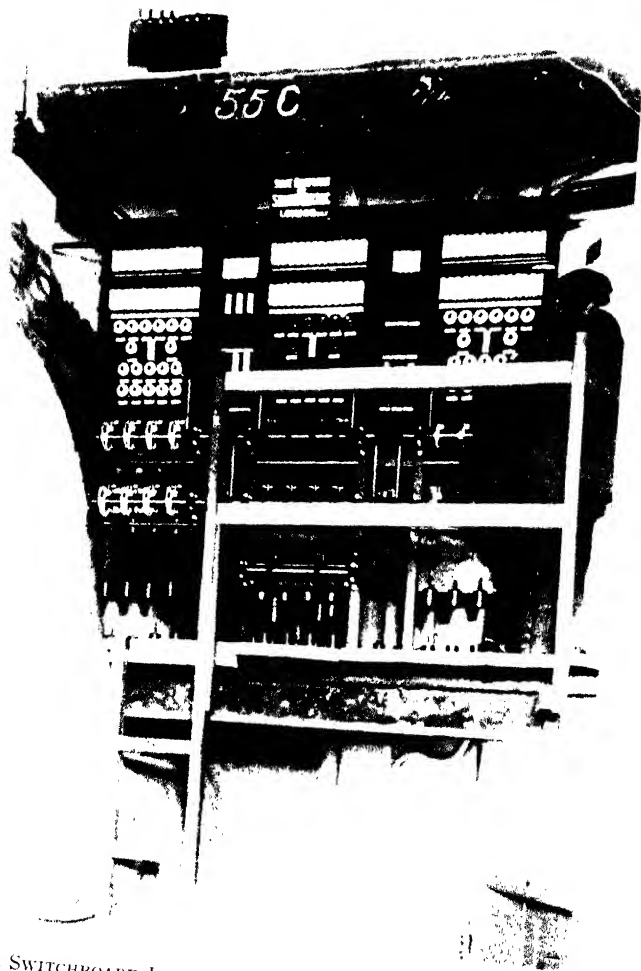
One society, the Huddersfield Thespians, has a semi-independent Reading Circle attached to it which appoints a member as the official critic for each of the Society's productions; it is the duty of this member to criticise the play in a fair and reasonable manner and to open a discussion upon it at a meeting of members subsequent to the performance. At this meeting the members have the opportunity of saying what they think about the play, its acting, and production.

It is true, of course, that a great many performances by amateurs will not stand criticism. There is simply nothing to be said of them. They can be dismissed with one word. But the amateurs who work seriously need serious critical attention to help them in their efforts; no better service can be rendered to the theatre than to give it to them.

There is one aspect of dramatic criticism that many people must have observed, of which amateur companies are often painfully conscious. Different standards of judgment are applied to the light from those applied to the serious play. Light and superficial plays

are usually received with easy respect and even praise. They do not invite serious attention and do not get it. Serious plays, on the other hand, ask for serious criticism, and are usually considered seriously and frequently unfavourably commented upon. This often seems unfair and does indeed operate to the disadvantage of the serious play; for the criticism, though unfavourable and faultfinding, is not necessarily any better informed or more accurate than that devoted so gushingly to the light play. There is, however, no escape from the dilemma. The serious play may have taken in its production ten times the effort of the light play, be done with ten times the skill, and with no comparison in the final result. It suffers in its criticism not merely from the general feebleness of theatrical criticism; but if by chance it gets a good critic to write about it, he must treat it as it demands to be treated, seriously. Thus it comes about that in the same issue of a paper there may appear a warmly appreciative notice of a frivolous play and a coldly critical notice of a serious play, though one is a contribution to the theatre and the other of no consequence at all.

What the critics of a serious play should do, and I mean by this a play seriously produced, not necessarily serious in its subject, is to treat the production as seriously and severely as it deserves; but also to appreciate the quality of the work that has gone into it. In the production, the acting, the staging, the costumes, the lighting, there may be some real achievement, a certain success that is attained, which should be recognised and commented upon. That helps the company



THE SWITCHBOARD INSTALLED AT THE WELWYN THEATRE (1928)



and the public too. The business of the critic is above all to recognise what is good; and nothing furthers good work more than to acknowledge it.

#### THE VALUE OF SELF-CRITICISM

The amateur player should listen to criticism of his own and other players' work, not because the criticism may be sound, but because it should quicken his own critical faculty by enabling him to see his work objectively. He should be self-critical, with the ability to analyse and examine his own work without self-consciousness.

One element in amateur playing which has to be recognised in criticism of it, both by those who engage in that work and the critics, is this: the novelty of the situation in which the players find themselves should spur them to great effort, and it usually does. The actors rise above themselves, and above their real abilities. They respond, as it were, to a challenge; keyed-up to a high pitch they overcome for once every handicap. If they were to play often they would find their proper level; they would not be able to maintain the abandon, the magnetism, the joy of their rare appearances on the stage. That is why second and subsequent performances by amateurs are often below the level of the first performance so far as mere acting goes. That is why even the best of amateur players are so often unreliable, good at one time, incredibly bad at other times; for they have no technique, or very little, to support them, only excitement and the unfamiliarity of their surroundings.

In criticism of acting on the amateur stage the above observation is of much importance. It explains why a certain quality of performance can be demanded of amateur players in their occasional appearances; it should be understood by amateur players themselves so that they may be able to estimate their own achievements.

### AMATEUR DRAMATIC FESTIVALS

The competitions between amateur theatrical companies held in England and America, known by the name of "tournaments" or "festivals" have a value in encouraging critical attention of amateur production and acting and in testing the work of producers and players. The British Drama League has organized three National Festivals of Community Drama and the fourth will take place in 1930. One hundred and twelve amateur companies took part in the first in 1926-1927, one hundred and sixty-four took part in the second in 1927-1928, and two hundred and five took part in 1928-1929. The aims of the Festivals are "To assist the development of the art of the theatre and to promote a right relation between the drama and the life of the community." The specific objects of the Festivals are declared to be:

(a) to raise the standard of production among amateur societies by according them the opportunity of receiving criticism from an impartial adjudicator and of testing their work before a wider and more critical public; (b) to promote a high standard of dramatic appreciation among audiences, and (c) to encourage the progressive element in the amateur theatre.

The Festival is organized in four areas: Eastern; Western; Northern; Scotland, each of which has its own Area Festival. The National Festival is held in London when the companies which gained the first place in each Area Festival play for the award of the Lord Howard de Walden Cup. That cup was won for the first time in 1927 by the Welwyn Garden City Theatre Society, for its performance of *Mr. Sampson*, in 1928 by the Ardrossan and Saltcoats Players Club, for a performance of Sir J. M. Barrie's play *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals* and in 1929 by the Liverpool Playgoers Club, for *The Devil Among the Skins*, by Ernest Goodwin.

Players taking part in the Festival must consist of "amateurs in the usual meaning of the word, *i.e.*, persons who do not make play production or acting or the teaching of acting or elocution their vocation or earn their living in that manner and are not under contract to perform with any professional company during the period of the Festival." A professional and paid producer may be employed. Dramatic Schools conducted for the training of professional actors are not eligible.

The dramatic work offered by any entrant must be a one-act play, or extract from a longer play, not exceeding forty minutes in performance. No play or extract may contain less than three speaking parts. No individual player may perform for more than one society entering the Festival. A society may enter any number of teams for the Festival, but only one of these may be eligible for the Area Final.



The following are the conditions under which the National Festival in London is carried out:

The Central Committee will be responsible for providing the theatre, necessary organization, lighting, and one set of stage curtains, together with the third-class return railway fares to London of the players taking part, including their stage manager and producer, but not exceeding nine persons in all.

Any doors, windows, or other flats must be provided by the competing teams.

Teams may bring their own scenery, etc.

No scene may take more than fifteen minutes to set, and ten minutes to strike.

It is usual for a London theatre to be engaged for an afternoon, the day chosen being Monday so that the companies can rehearse on the stage during the previous day, Sunday. Ordinary theatre prices are charged for seats, except for the entertainments tax which is remitted, and the theatre is always crowded with an eager and appreciative audience.

The system of judging is as follows:

The Judge or Judges for the preliminary performances will be appointed by the Area Committees. The Judge or Judges for the Area Final Festivals will be selected by the National Committee.

Three Judges will be nominated by the Council of the British Drama League for the National Festival in London.

Judging will be conducted on the following system of marks:

- (1) Acting, 25 per cent.
- (2) Production, 50 per cent.
- (3) Stage presentation, 10 per cent.
- (4) Dramatic endeavour, 15 per cent.

The following notes for the use of players and judges are issued by the National Festival Committee:

(1) *ACTING*:

Includes characterization—naturally a very important factor. Audibility of speech, variation in tone, emphasis, gesture and movement will also be closely watched. The acting will be judged on the general level, e. g., two entrants may present plays with six characters in each; in one case two of the six parts may be played to perfection and four badly, and in the other case all six parts may be played with average ability; judges will favour the average, smoother, performance. For this reason judges will expect a very high level indeed from societies who present a play with the minimum cast allowed by Rule V.

(2) *PRODUCTION*:

Includes attention to such essentials as—Interpretation of the spirit and meaning of the play. Team work. General pace and variation in tempo. Grouping and movement. Making of points and sense of climax. Adjudicators will take account of the greater difficulty of a play with a large cast.

(3) *STAGE PRESENTATION*:

Includes such factors as Stage setting, properties, lighting, costume and make-up. While the judges will appreciate the fact that the effect of plays must often suffer as a result of being presented under strange conditions, the stage setting and lighting should contain sufficient indication of what the producer would achieve under ideal conditions. Within these limitations, judges will be on the lookout for touches of detail such as give the value of lighting, other than simply as a means of illumination.

*Costumes and Make-up.* The difficult conditions obtaining in the case of settings and lighting do not apply in the case of costumes and make-up, and therefore a high standard in this respect will be expected. Credit will be given for the appropriateness of the costumes to the characters and to the play, and the manner in which they have been designed and made.

#### (4) *DRAMATIC ENDEAVOUR:*

Under this heading will be considered the dramatic merit of the play.

While entrants should guard against allowing their ambition to outrun their capabilities, they should realise that credit will be freely given to experimental work, whether in the choice of new plays, translations, or examples of new forms of technique and stage craft.

It should be remembered that one of the aims of the Festival is "to encourage the progressive element in the Amateur Theatre."

With a view to encouraging the performance of original plays by new authors, a special award is made for the best unpublished one-act play by a new author, performed during the Festival. By a "new author" is meant one whose work has hitherto been performed by no other organization than that entering the play for the Festival. This award is not necessarily given to the winner of the Area Festival or the Cup, and is made independently of the production by a sub-committee which considers all MSS of original plays produced.

The award takes the form of a guarantee of publication of the play without expense to the author.

In America the principal competition is the Little Theatre Tournament first held in New York City in 1923. The organization of this Tournament differs considerably from the British Festival. Four one-act plays are produced each evening by four different little theatre groups for five evenings, until twenty presentations have been shown. Five judges witness these productions and select four out of the twenty plays

as the best plays presented, judged according to a standard set as follows:

50 per cent for Presentation, meaning, interpretation, or "how well the idea of the play is gotten over."

25 per cent for Acting.

15 per cent for Setting.

10 per cent for Selection of Play.

The four presentations so chosen are awarded prizes and these four productions are played again on Saturday afternoon and evening. At the Saturday afternoon performance the judges decide on the best play of the four, according to the standards set forth above, and the play so selected is awarded the David Belasco Cup at the Saturday evening performance. The cup is held by the winning group for one year. At the next Tournament it is again competed for.

When all the contesting productions have been presented, and after the Friday evening programme, the judges award the following prizes:

I. Samuel French Award No. 1. For the best presentation of an original, unpublished play, \$200.00, with the understanding that this play will be printed, published and distributed by Samuel French, Inc., who will control the sole rights of the play as the author's agent, guaranteeing the author a royalty of 50 per cent. of the income derived therefrom.

II. Samuel French Award No. 2. A second award of \$200.00 under the same conditions as Award No. 1 for the next best presentation.

III. An award of \$200.00 for the best presentation of a published or unpublished play.

IV. An award of \$200.00 for the next best presentation of a published or unpublished play.

The rules that govern the tournaments are as follows. It will be observed that the definition of an amateur differs from that adopted in the British Festival.

The contest is open to all little theatre non-professional groups. This is to be interpreted as to mean that no professional actors shall be employed in the presentations. By a "professional actor" is meant a person who makes acting his vocation and earns his living in that manner. This rule, however, does not exclude ex-professional actors, but they must have been out of the profession for at least a year before the contest. A group that pays a performer for his work in the Tournament play forfeits its right to consideration for a prize. A paid director does not come within the restriction mentioned, so long as he does not also act a part in the Tournament play.

An entrance fee of One Hundred and Sixty-Five Dollars is payable by each group. Only twenty groups can be accommodated in the contest. Each group will receive gratis 95 orchestra tickets for the night on which it plays and the group can dispose of these tickets in any manner that it chooses.

Each group must supply its own scenery, properties and special lighting effects. Ordinary lighting such as footlights and border-lights will be supplied. Any special lighting or other effects will be arranged for if the matter is taken up with the Tournament management.

Each group will deliver its scenery, properties and effects to the stage door of the theatre on the morning of the day they are to play, after which the production will be handled and set by the theatre crew under the direction of the group manager.

The scenery, properties and effects of a play must remain in charge of the Tournament management until a decision has been reached by the judge as to the prize plays that are to be played a second and third time on Saturday, after which time and on due notice the group must remove its scenery properties and effects either from the theatre or from a designated storage place.

A group cannot determine the evening on which it shall play beyond making a suggestion as to preference. The programmes will be made up by a committee with due consideration for a well balanced bill. This committee will be supplied with the names of the plays only and not with the names of the groups making the presentation, so that its judgment will be influenced by nothing except to arrange a bill that will have variety and make an entertaining programme. This method fairly works to the advantage of all plays offered for consideration.

Each group will be allowed one hour during the afternoon of the day of performance for a complete scenery, properties and lighting rehearsal. A dress rehearsal of the actors is not guaranteed unless it can be achieved within the hour granted for the scenery rehearsal. Ample time will be allowed the actors to gauge their voices and become otherwise familiar with the stage.

The names of plays must be submitted to the management of the Tournament on or before April 1st. The same play cannot be used by two competing groups during the contest. The group first submitting the name of a play will have the exclusive use of that play in the Tournament.

The David Belasco Cup has been awarded as follows:

- 1923 The East-End Players, Manhattan, in *The Little Stone House*, by George Calderon.
- 1924 The Little Theatre, Dallas, Texas, in *Judge Lynch*, by Lennox Robinson.
- 1925 The Little Theatre, Dallas, Texas, in *The No 'Count Boy*, by Paul Green.
- 1926 The Little Theatre, Dallas, Texas, in *El Cristo*, by Margaret Larkin.
- 1927 The Welwyn Garden City Theatre Society, England, in *Mr. Sampson*, by Charles Lee.
- 1928 The Ardrossan and Saltcoats Players Club, Scotland, in *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*, by J. M. Barrie.

1929 The Forest Hills, L. I. Gardens Players in *Shall We Join the Ladies?* by J. M. Barrie.

It is interesting to note that the plays that gained first place in the British Festival were also awarded the same position in New York. These companies visited America at the invitation of Mr. Walter Hartwig, the organizer of the Little Theatre Tournament.

It is an interesting feature of these "Festivals" and "Tournaments" that the "competitive" element has not protruded itself. Those who take part in them show an interest in one another's work and recognise the merit of it. There is definite evidence among the players of a desire not so much to win as to put forward their best efforts and to be judged severely upon them. Many people dislike a competitive element in the arts, and many actors and amateur companies, among them some of the best, will not take part in the competitions for that reason. While recognising the danger it can be said, however, that up to the present the spirit of these competitions has been admirable, dominated most clearly by artistic aims.

#### THE PLACE OF THE AMATEUR THEATRE

The amateur theatre has gained a place in the practice of theatrical art; it can be held in that place by establishing for itself high standards of work and keeping to them. By equipping itself for experimental work, by the study of acting, the mechanism of the stage, the arts of scenic design, costume and lighting and above all by subjecting itself to the direction of the

best artists in its ranks it will contribute to the advancement of the theatre. Amateurs and professionals may co-operate in this for their aim is the same; they are not and never can be in competition, for one supplements the other. The amateur can help to raise the standards of the theatre by the demands that he makes upon it; by his efforts to increase public appreciation and to cultivate the public taste; by entering the theatre not for what he can get out of it but because he loves it, having no other interest but to serve it.





A GLOSSARY OF  
STAGE AND THEATRICAL TERMS



## A GLOSSARY OF STAGE AND THEATRICAL TERMS

There is no good modern dictionary of stage terms, and in putting forward the following list of words I do not pretend that it is complete; but I offer it as a first attempt at the preparation of such a dictionary, in the hope that it may be found useful not only by amateurs but by students of the stage generally. Some of the words have other meanings than those in which they are used in the theatre; I have not taken note of those meanings. Terms that are not peculiar to the theatre, though used in it, such as electrical and architectural terms, etc., I have ignored as a rule; also I have generally omitted slang. Descriptions of stage "effects" are not included here but will be found in Chapter V, pages 76 to 87; descriptions of certain lighting apparatus will be found in Chapter IX, pages 140 to 143. The index should also be consulted as some terms defined in the Glossary will be found described in greater detail in the text of the book.

### A

<b>A. S. M.</b>	Assistant stage manager. He is often also the prompter.
<b>Act</b>	(a) One of the main divisions of a play. (b) To perform a part on the stage.
<b>Act Drop</b>	A painted cloth that can be lowered in place of the tabs.
<b>Acting Area</b>	That part of the stage on which the action of the play takes place.
<b>Acting Manager</b>	The business manager of the theatre, who is responsible for all business arrangements and for the "front of the house."

<b>Action</b>	The movement of a play as carried on by the actors.
<b>Actor</b>	One who impersonates a character or acts a part on the stage.
<b>Actor Manager</b>	An actor with his own company who is (usually) his own producer and star player.
<b>Adaptation</b>	(a) A play altered in translation from one language to another. (b) The modification or abbreviation of a play for a particular audience.
<b>After-piece</b>	A short play or scene following the main item of a programme.
<b>Amateur</b>	(a) One who loves or is fond of or has a taste for the stage or the theatre. (b) One who cultivates acting as a pastime as distinguished from one who follows it professionally. (c) It is sometimes used disparagingly, as of one who is incompetent, or a dabbler, or a superficial worker.
<b>Amphitheatre</b>	A circular, semi-circular or oval building with a central arena.
<b>Apron</b>	The part of the stage that extends in front of the proscenium. Sometimes called "Apron-piece," "Apron-stage," or "Fore-stage."
<b>Aside</b>	Part of a dialogue spoken by an actor which the audience is intended to hear while the other actors are supposed not to hear it.
<b>At Rise</b>	The stage when ready for the rise of the curtain.
<b>Auditorium</b>	The part of the theatre from which the audience witnesses the play.

B

- Back** The portion of the stage behind the scene. Hence, "Back-stage."
- Backdrop** A curtain, or painted or plain cloth, dropped across the back of the scene.
- Backing** Sections of scenery used to mask doors, windows or other openings.
- Balcony Spot** A spot light placed on the front of the balcony to light the front of the scene.
- Ballerina** A female dancer in a ballet.
- Ballet** A theatrical dance with pantomime. Hence, "Ballet Master," one who trains the dancers in a ballet.
- Band Room** The room usually under the stage used by the instrumental players when they are not at their places in the orchestra.
- Bar** See *Batten*.
- Batten** (a) A piece of pipe or timber, usually 1" or 1½" in diameter, supported over the stage from the grid, to which scenery is attached.  
(b) A row of lights suspended over the stage.
- Black Out** An instantaneous switching off of all lights on the stage.
- Blinder** (a) See *Mask*.  
(b) Lights placed on the floor of the stage outside the proscenium facing the audience sometimes used when changing a scene without lowering the curtain.
- Blocks** Wooden or steel cases surrounding a pulley wheel over which the line travels for flying scenery.
- Boards** The stage.
- Bobbins** Wooden runners on the curtain wire to which curtain hooks are attached.
- Book** The prompt copy of a play.

- Border** A strip of canvas suspended from above used to mask the upper part of the stage, to screen the lights, and to represent sky, ceiling, overhanging trees, etc.; numbered from 1 upwards, starting from the proscenium.
- Border Batten** See *Batten*.
- Border Light** See *Batten*.
- Box Light** A metal box with a high powered light and a reflector, but no lens. Must be used with a screen or colour frame.
- Box-scene** A scene constructed of flats, joined together to make an interior. Also called a "Box-Set."
- Brace** An extending piece of timber about 1" square with a hook at the top which is attached to the flats by means of a screw eye and fixed to the stage floor by a weight, or a screw, for the purpose of keeping scenery in a rigid position.
- Brail** To move a hanging piece of scenery by hauling it out of the vertical by attached ropes.
- Bridge** (a) A transverse section of the stage capable of being raised or lowered.  
(b) A gallery across the back of the stage used for painting cloths hung from the grid.  
(c) A gallery directly over the proscenium used for spot-lighting and other purposes.
- Broad Comedy** A part or play in which the comic element is made obvious. Hence, "Broad Comedian."
- Buffo** A burlesque actor.
- Bunches** A metal hood or reflector containing a number of lamps for stage lighting.

- Burlesque** A play or part in which exaggerated mockery is made of persons or a situation.
- Burner Lights** Round or square clusters of lamps on standards.
- Business** (a) The action and movement of the actors as distinguished from dialogue.  
(b) See *Line of Business*.

C

- Call** (a) When an actor is summoned to a rehearsal.  
(b) When summoned on the stage to play his part.  
(c) When called before the house at the close of a play or act.
- Call Beginners** Direction to the call-boy to call on to the stage the actors who open the play.
- Call Board** A notice board usually placed near the stage door, on which notices affecting the staff or artists are displayed.
- Carpet Cut** A narrow floor board with hinges immediately behind the "tabs" to allow the stage cloth to be clipped in. This obviates the use of nails and the possibility of an actor tripping over the cloth.
- Cast** (a) The list of players taking part in a play.  
(b) To cast a play is to select the actors for the parts in a play.
- Ceiling Spot** A spot-light fixed on, or in an opening in, the ceiling of the auditorium to light the front on a particular part of a scene.



<b>Centre</b>	The centre of the stage. Hence, "Right Centre," "Left Centre," "Down Centre," "Up Centre."
<b>Centre Line</b>	A line from front to back in the centre of the stage from which positions are given. (See <i>Centre</i> .)
<b>Character</b>	A part taken by an actor on the stage.
<b>Character Part</b>	A part in which peculiarities or eccentricities of character are stressed in make-up and playing.
<b>Choreography</b>	The art of stage dancing.
<b>Claque</b>	A body of hired applauders.
<b>Cleat</b>	An iron or wooden fixture to which a cord can be tied for making scenery firm.
<b>Cloth</b>	Canvas scenery suspended from above.
<b>Clown</b>	An ancient stage character, a jester, dressed in motley, and usually shown as a fool or knave; in Shakespeare sometimes a yokel.
<b>Colour Frame</b>	Frames into which are placed coloured gelatine or glass for stage lighting.
<b>Colour Mediums</b>	Sheets of coloured gelatine or glass for stage lighting.
<b>Columbine</b>	The female part in the <i>Commedia dell' arte</i> .
<b>Comedian</b>	A comic actor.
<b>Comedienne</b>	A woman comic actor.
<b>Comedy</b>	A play with an agreeable ending.
<b>Comic Opera</b>	A light opera with a happy ending.
<b>Commedia dell'Arte</b>	Improvised comedy of the Italian stage, in which the parts were always played by stock characters, the same actors playing always the same parts. It flourished from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, though based on ancient tradition, and survives to the present day in the <i>Harlequinade</i> .

- Community Drama** Plays suitable for acting in a Community Theatre.
- Community Theatre** A theatre organized with the object of presenting plays for the entertainment or enlightenment of a community rather than for commercial purposes.
- Concert Batten** The first lighting batten, behind the tabs, known also as No. 1 batten.
- Concert Border** The border used to mask in the No. 1 batten if not done by the tabs or pelmet.
- Construction** A method of production in which the action of the play is placed on different levels by the use of scaffolding, ladders, steps and platforms.
- Costume Play** A play performed in classic historical or outmoded dress. Hence, "Costume part" and "Costume actor."
- Costume Plot** A list of the characters in a play with their costumes for each act.
- Counterweight System** A system for flying cloths, scenery and curtains, similar in construction to that described under "Grid," in which weights are used for balancing, and the short, long and centre are controlled by an endless rope. It reduces the labour necessary for operating.
- Crepe Hair** Prepared wool sold in a plaited form for use in make-up for beards, etc.
- Cue** (a) Words or action on which an actor speaks or acts.  
(b) A signal for lighting, working the curtain or other action by the stage staff.
- Curtain Call** When actors are called before the audience at the fall of the curtain on a play or act of a play.

- Curtains** Material suspended from above to screen the stage from the audience, or for draping the stage in place of scenery.
- Curtain-raiser** A short play performed before the main item of the programme.
- Cut** A narrow transverse section of the stage that can be opened. See *Carpet Cut*.
- Cut-cloth** Scenery cut to a pattern to represent trees, shrubs, etc., some parts of which may be mounted on gauze. They are numbered from 1 upwards, starting from the proscenium.
- Cyclorama** A large piece of curtain or canvas draped or hung smooth in a curve around three sides of the stage, used to represent sky. A permanent cyclorama consists of a curved backing to the stage, constructed of concrete or timber and plaster, and of sufficient height to be masked by the front of the proscenium. Also known as "Panorama."

## D

- Dead-Head** A member of the audience who has made no payment for his seat. See *Paper*.
- Décor** The scenery, or setting of a play.
- Decoration** The adornment of a play, the stage setting.
- Dialogue** The words spoken by the actors on the stage.
- Diction** The manner or style in which words are spoken.
- Dim** A direction to decrease the light on the stage.
- Dimmer** An apparatus for reducing the light on the stage.

<b>Dips</b>	Small traps in the floor of the stage containing adaptors for plugging in lighting units.
<b>Director</b>	One who guides or controls a company of players or a play. See <i>Producer</i> .
<b>Discovered</b>	Said of a player when on the stage at the rise of the curtain.
<b>Dog-town</b>	A town in which a play is "tried-out" previous to its performance in the metropolis.
<b>Dome</b>	A plaster or canvas cyclorama that curves at the top of the stage from the back towards the front in the form of a dome.
<b>Down Stage</b>	The portion of the stage nearest to the audience.
<b>Drama</b>	(a) Plays in general. (b) A play with a serious ending.
<b>Dramatic</b>	Action on the stage, particularly striking or impressive action.
<b>Dramatist</b>	A writer of plays.
<b>Dramatis Personae</b>	The characters of a play.
<b>Dress Rehearsal</b>	A complete rehearsal of a play immediately before the actual performance.
<b>Dressing the House</b>	Distribution of complimentary tickets to people who will attend the performance.
<b>Dressing Room</b>	Rooms near the stage in which the actors dress and make-up.
<b>Drop Curtain</b>	A painted cloth to let down between the acts.
<b>Dry Up</b>	To forget one's words in a play.

**E**

<b>Effect Projector</b>	A lighting apparatus, or an attachment to an arc lantern, for throwing pictorial or moving colour effects upon a scene.
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- Elevator Stage** A stage consisting of two floors one above the other to enable a second scene to be set while the first is being used.
- Encore** The demand by the audience for a repetition of a song, dance, etc.
- Ensemble** The general effect of a scene.
- Entr'acte** See *Interact.*
- Expressionism** A method of writing, acting, or producing a play in which an attempt is made to express the thought or emotion of the artist directly, usually by other means than the resemblance to real life.
- Extras** Ladies or gentlemen engaged to walk on. (See *Super* and *Walking on.*)
- Extravaganza** A dramatic composition of a light nature that is intended to be fantastic and exaggerated in its situations and character.
- F**
- F. O. H.** Front of House.
- False Proscenium** A structure placed around the Proscenium to lessen the height and breadth of the stage.
- False Proscenium Border** A curtain immediately behind the top of the proscenium opening which can be raised or lowered to mask in the scenery at the top.
- Farce** An amusing play consisting of absurd and improbable situations.
- Feature Men** Actors who specialise in "star" roles and only appear as such.
- Feed** To play up in a scene to the leading actor.
- Fireproof Curtain** A specially prepared curtain made of asbestos and iron, constructed to fit close up against the proscenium and to cut the stage off from the audience.

- Fit-up** Temporary stages, prosceniums and equipment for converting an ordinary platform into a stage.
- Flat** A section of scenery constructed of timber covered with canvas.
- Flies** (a) The part of the stage above the proscenium opening into which scenery is raised or flown.  
(b) The working side for stage hands, always out on the O. P. side of the stage, called this name by reason of the ropes and machinery for the purpose of flying the scenery being on this side.
- Float** See *Footlights*.
- Flood Light** A metal box with a high powered light and a reflector, with or without a lens, used for lighting broad surfaces.
- Fly** To hang anything above the stage.
- Fly Floor** A gallery for stage hands, on the wall, at a height just above the proscenium on the O. P. side and running from down to up stage. See *Flies*.
- Fly Gallery** See *Fly Floor*.
- Fly-rail** A rail on the fly floor to which the lines used for flying scenery are tied to pins or cleats. Also called "Pin-rail."
- Follow** A stage lighting term meaning to follow an actor with a spot light.
- Footlights** A row of lights with reflectors placed along the floor in front of the stage.
- Fore-stage** See *Apron*.
- Fortuny System** A system of stage lighting by indirect means by an Italian inventor.
- Fox Wedges** Wooden wedges used under flats on a stage with a rake to keep them perpendicular.

<b>Frame-piece</b>	See <i>Flat</i> .
<b>Front of House</b>	The auditorium.
<b>Front Piece</b>	A short play or scene preceding the main item of the programme, sometimes called a "curtain-raiser."

## G

<b>Gag</b>	Words introduced into a part by an actor, either impromptu or rehearsed without forming part of the book.
<b>Gelatine</b>	A transparent substance obtainable in sheets in a wide range of colours for use in stage lighting. Called "Mediums."
<b>Grand Drapery</b>	See <i>Pelmet</i> .
<b>Green-room</b>	A room, near the stage, for the use of the actors, where they may meet and wait for their "calls."
<b>Grid or Grid-iron</b>	A skeleton roof over the stage from which lines over pulley blocks, running P. S. to O. P. are fixed for the purpose of raising and lowering scenery, curtains, borders, lighting battens, etc. To ensure that curtains, etc., are level when lowered it is necessary to have 3 blocks and one bend to each cloth suspended; these are known as "short" for the line nearest the flies, "long" for the line on the prompt side, and the middle line is called "centre." When the cloths are found to be perpendicular the lines are tied off to a cleat on the fly floor.
<b>Ground Row</b>	Low pieces of scenery to form walls, fences, hedges, etc.

## H

- Hand-props** Properties that are brought on to the stage by the actor.
- Hanging Piece** Any piece of scenery that is flown.
- Harlequin** or Arlequin, one of the minor characters of the *Commedia dell'arte*; now one of the characters in the Harlequinade.
- Harlequinade** A play in pantomime, the characters being Clown, Pantaloon, Harlequin and Columbine; a survival of the *Commedia dell'arte*.
- Heavy Man** An actor who takes important serious parts; at one time applied to villains, but now used of other important non-juvenile parts.
- Histrionic** Used of actors and acting.
- House** (a) The auditorium.  
(b) The number of persons in the audience, for instance "a good house."
- House Lights** The lights in the auditorium.

## I

- Ingenué** An actress who plays a young girl's part.
- Inter-act** Music, dancing or some other entertainment performed between the acts of a play.
- Interlude** A play belonging to the sixteenth century performed in a simple form either with dialogue or in dumb show.
- Interval** The time between the performance of one act of a play and another.



## J

**Juvenile** An actor or actress who plays a young man's or a young woman's part.

## L

**Ladder Lights** See *Proscenium Lights*.

**Lead** To play "lead" is to play the principal part; hence, "leading lady," "leading man," "juvenile lead," "second lead," etc.

**Lead Blocks** Wooden or steel case surrounding 3 pulley wheels through which the short, long and centre lines travel from the grid down to the fly floor.

**Left** The left hand side of the stage when facing the audience.

**Light Ground Row** A batten used on the floor of the stage.

**Lighting Batten** A metal structure wired for electric lamps running from P. S. to O. P.

**Light-plot** A schedule of the lighting for a play with the cues indicating where it is required in the scene.

**Line of Business** The parts in which an actor specialises.

**Lines for Grid** 1¼" hemp or ½" wire rope.

**Little Theatre** (a) A small theatre, without necessarily any other characteristics.  
(b) Used in America for the Amateur Theatre.

**Low Comedy** A part in a play in which the comic element is both strongly stressed and of an elementary nature. Hence, "Low Comedian."

## M

**Make-up** The make-up of the features by wigs, false hair, and cosmetics.

- Manikin** Another name for marionette.
- Marionette** A doll used to represent persons or animals worked by strings for the performance of plays, ballets, etc., on a miniature stage, with or without spoken dialogue or music.
- Mask** (a) An entertainment in costume with music and dancing, sometimes with dialogue, often given at Court in the seventeenth century in Europe and usually performed by amateurs, in which the guests in disguise sometimes took part.  
(b) A covering made of velvet, silk, papier maché, or other material, for concealing the face, or for covering the entire head to represent a particular character.  
(c) To cover a part of the stage from the view of the audience.
- Masque** See *Mask* (a)
- Matinée** An afternoon performance; also known as the "Morning Performance."
- Melodrama** A play of a sensational character with strong action and a happy ending in which virtue triumphs.
- Mezzanine Floor** A floor underneath the stage.
- Mime** An actor; "to mime" is to act.
- Miracle Play** A religious play of the middle ages.
- Mise-en-scene** The scenery and properties of a play as set on the stage.
- Monologue** A scene in which an actor speaks by himself.
- Morality** A species of play intended to teach some moral or religious lesson and used specifically of the plays in the middle ages in which the characters personify abstract qualities.

- Music-plot** A list of the music for a play with the cues indicating where it is required to be played.
- Musical Comedy** A play with music and dancing of a light and vivacious kind.
- Mystery** A religious play of the middle ages. See *Morality* and *Miracle Play*.

## N

- Naturalistic Numbers** See *Realism*.  
The songs and dances in a musical play.

## O

- Off** The part of the stage not in view of the audience. Hence, "off stage."
- On the Road** See *On Tour*.
- On Tour** Said of actors when performing in a play from town to town.
- Opera** A dramatic composition set to music with or without spoken dialogue, in which the music is the main feature.
- Opera-bouffe** An opera of a burlesque character.
- Operetta** A short light opera.
- Opposite Prompt or O. P.** The right-hand side of the stage opposite the prompt-side.
- Orchestra** The part of the theatre immediately in front of the stage for the use of instrumental performers.

## P

- Pageant** (a) A performance or tableau on a stage on wheels in the open air.  
(b) A spectacular play with processions dealing with a historical subject usually, though not always, given in the open air.
- Panorama** See *Cyclorama*.

- Pantaloön** A character in the *Commedia dell'arte*, representing a merchant, Columbine's father; survives as an old clown in the Harlequinade.
- Pantomime** (a) A play in dumb show.  
(b) A comic scene performed by clown, pantaloön, harlequin and columbine with dancing.  
(c) A Christmas entertainment with music and dancing, usually with a fairy tale as plot.
- Paper** A ticket of admission to a theatre for which no payment is made.
- Pastoral** A romantic play in a country setting.
- Peg** See *Stage Screw*.
- Pelmet** A short curtain or drapery placed just behind the top of the proscenium to mask in the No. 1 lighting batten.
- Perch** A structure fixed at either side of the stage just behind the proscenium opening for the purpose of operating a light on the scenery.
- Picture-stage** Methods of staging and playing in which the proscenium arch is regarded as a frame for the stage picture.
- Pierrette** A female member of a company of pierrots.
- Pierrot** A clownish travelling singer with a whitened face and a white costume.
- Play** A composition in dialogue for performance on the stage. A "One-Act Play" is a play in one act usually though not always in one scene, lasting normally from 20 to 50 minutes; if less than 20 minutes it is called a "sketch." A "Full Length Play" is a play sufficient in length for a complete programme, normally from 2 to 3 hours.

<b>Playbill</b>	A bill or poster announcing a theatrical performance.
<b>Play Doctor</b>	One whose business it is to re-write, re-arrange, or otherwise amend the book of a play to make it suitable for performance. Sometimes called "Stage Carpenter."
<b>Player</b>	See <i>Actor</i> .
<b>Playgoer</b>	One who habitually goes to the theatre to see the play.
<b>Playhouse</b>	A theatre.
<b>Playwright</b>	The writer of a play.
<b>Plot</b>	The plan of action in a play.
<b>Practicable</b>	Any scenery or properties, such as a door, window, fireplace, etc., capable of actual use in the business or action of a play.
<b>Premiere</b>	The first performance of a play.
<b>Prima Ballerina</b>	Leading female dancer in a ballet.
<b>Prima Donna</b>	Leading female singer in opera.
<b>Private Theatricals</b>	A performance of a play by amateurs in a private house.
<b>Producer</b>	One who controls the players and the stage and is responsible for the interpretation of the play as a whole.
<b>Programme</b>	A printed list of the characters in a play and the names of the players, with other information about the performance.
<b>Prompt</b>	To repeat to an actor who hesitates or forgets the words that come next in his part.
<b>Prompt-desk</b>	Small desk at prompt side of stage for the use of the stage-manager or prompter.
<b>Prompt-bell</b>	A bell used by the prompter in the theatre to summon an actor.
<b>Prompt-box</b>	The prompter's box on the stage.
<b>Prompt-copy</b>	The special copy of the play from which the prompter prompts the

	actors. It contains all stage directions, calls, etc.
<b>Prompter</b>	One who has charge of the book of the play and follows the actors when speaking their words.
<b>Prompt-side or P. S.</b>	The actor's left-hand side of the stage when facing the auditorium; usually the working side of the stage for stage-manager and prompter.
<b>Properties</b>	Articles and materials used on the stage for furnishing a scene as distinct from the canvas and wooden scenery.
<b>Property-man or Master</b>	The member of the stage staff in charge of properties.
<b>Property Plot</b>	A list of all the properties, etc., used in each scene of a play, with plans of the arrangement of the furniture.
<b>Props</b>	An abbreviation for stage properties.
<b>Proscenium</b>	The arch or framework around the stage facing the auditorium.
<b>Proscenium Lights</b>	Lights fixed to a vertical pipe placed behind the tormentor. Also known as "Ladder Lights."
<b>Puppet</b>	A marionette. Hence, "Puppet-play," a play for marionettes.
<b>Puppeteer</b>	One who manipulates the puppets or marionettes in a marionette theatre.

Q

<b>Quick Change</b>	(a) To change rapidly from one scene to another. (b) When an actor has to change his costume quickly.
<b>Quick Change Room</b>	A small dressing room in the wings for the use of a performer who has to make a quick change of costume.

## R

- Rake** The rise on a stage from the footlights to the back wall. Stages are now built level.
- Realism** A method of writing, acting or producing a play to resemble real life.
- Rehearsal** The preparation of the actors for a play by the practice of their parts together. A "Lighting Rehearsal" is a practice of the lighting for a play. A "Scene Rehearsal" is the practice of the setting of the scenes for a play.
- Repertoire** (a) The stock of plays that a company can perform.  
(b) The parts that a player knows and can perform.
- Repertory** See *Repertoire*. A "Repertory Theatre" is a theatre with a stock company of players and a stock of plays that it performs at intervals.
- Répétition Générale** A private performance preceding the public performance of a play.
- Representation** The performance of a play on the stage.
- Return** A piece of scenery used for masking the back stage or the actors from the view of the audience.
- Reveal** Imitation thickness painted on scenery to represent the solid.
- Revolving Stage** A circular stage constructed to revolve and to take two or more settings simultaneously, which are exhibited to the audience in turn.
- Revue** A play consisting of a number of short scenes which may or may not be related, with music and dancing; specifically when such a composition contains scenes which "review" current events.

<b>Right</b>	The actor's right-hand side of the stage when facing the audience.
<b>Ring-up</b>	To signal for the raising of the front curtains at the beginning of an act or scene of a play. Also "Ring-down," to signal for the lowering of the curtains at the end.
<b>Role</b>	A part taken by an actor in a play.
<b>Romance</b>	A play dealing with love in an imaginative manner.
<b>Rostrum</b>	A platform of wood for use as a landing place at the end of stairs, for terraces, stairs, etc. It may consist of a folding framework and a movable top as a stockpiece, and be of various heights.
<b>Rounds</b>	The applause by the audience.
<b>Run</b>	The consecutive performances of a play.
<b>Runners</b>	A wooden framework running on pulleys with bobbins attached to allow tableau or other curtains to be opened and closed, or raised and lowered from the grid.

## S

<b>Safety Curtain</b>	A fire-proof curtain that can be lowered in front of the tabs.
<b>Scene</b>	(a) One of the divisions of a play. (b) The place represented on the stage in which the action of the play is supposed to occur.
<b>Scene-dock</b>	A storage place for scenery.
<b>Scene-plot</b>	A list of the scenery used and the order of its use.
<b>Scenery</b>	(a) Wooden frames covered with canvas and painted. See <i>Flats</i> . (b) Any construction of wood and canvas or other materials arranged to represent a scene.



<b>Schwabe Lighting</b>	A system of stage lighting by means of special projectors and high powered lamps, manufactured by a German firm.
<b>Script</b>	The printed book or manuscript of a play or part in a play.
<b>Set</b>	(a) The complete parts of a scene. (b) To set a scene is to place the scenery on the stage as required for a play.
<b>Set-back</b>	A framing for doors and windows to give the appearance of thickness to a scene.
<b>Set-piece</b>	Any piece of scenery that stands on the stage and is not flown.
<b>Side</b>	A page of actor's script. An actor's part with cues is usually written or typed on half sheets of paper; a part is sometimes said to consist of "so many sides."
<b>Side Wing</b>	Flats stood at an angle at the sides of the stage for a scene.
<b>Signal</b>	Bells or lights or other means of warning the orchestra or stage staff in flies, etc.
<b>Situation</b>	The position of the players on the stage at any given moment in the action. Said specifically of the climax of an act or scene.
<b>Sketch</b>	A short play with few characters dealing with a single incident, lasting from 5 to 20 minutes.
<b>Sky Cloth</b>	A back curtain painted to represent sky in the distance.
<b>Sliding Stage</b>	A stage floor constructed in two or three sections and mounted on rollers so that scenes can be set and rolled into position.
<b>Soliloquy</b>	A speech spoken without the presence of hearers upon the stage.

- Space Stage** A recent method of staging plays in which lighting is concentrated upon the actors so that they are seen as it were in space without an objective setting.
- Specialist Lead** An actor who specialises in leading parts of a certain type.
- Spot-light** A metal box with a high powered light, lens and reflector, used to direct light upon particular parts of the stage.
- Spot Line** A block fixed in any position on the grid to enable scenery to be flown out of alignment.
- Stage** The entire area behind the proscenium on part of which the acting is done.
- Stage Brace** See *Brace*
- Stage Carpenter** (a) The member of the staff in charge of scenery.  
(b) See *Play Doctor*.
- Stage Cloth** A floor covering for the stage.
- Stage Craft** (a) The practical work of stage production.  
(b) The skill shown by a playwright in the construction of a play.
- Stage Direction** A direction inserted in a play to indicate the appropriate action, etc.
- Stage Director** See *Producer*.
- Stage Door** The entrance to that part of a theatre used by the players as distinguished from the public entrance.
- Stage-fright** Nervousness experienced by an actor when appearing before an audience, especially on his first appearance.
- Stage Manager** One whose office it is to superintend the production and performance of a play and to regulate the arrangements of the stage.

<b>Stage Screw</b>	A large screw with a grip in it for fixing braces to the floor.
<b>Star</b>	An actor playing a leading part whose name is displayed as the leading actor in connection with a production.
<b>Stock Company</b>	A company of players attached to a theatre with a stock of plays, or able to perform any play as required.
<b>Straight Part</b>	A part played without character make-up. Hence, "Straight Play," "Straight Actor."
<b>Strike</b>	To remove a scene and properties when finished with at a rehearsal or performance.
<b>Strip light</b>	A row of lights used in any position to light a part of the stage or scenery.
<b>Sub-plot</b>	A second or subsidiary plot to the main plot of a play.
<b>Super</b>	A supernumerary actor; one who takes a small part in a play without being required to speak except in a crowd.

### T

<b>Tabs</b>	The front or tableaux curtains.
<b>Take Call</b>	To take a call is to be called on the stage before the audience at the close of a play or act.
<b>Take the Corner</b>	A direction to move to the right or left corner of the stage.
<b>Tempo</b>	The time or pace at which a play or part is taken.
<b>Theatre</b>	A building designed for the performance of plays.
<b>Theatrical</b>	(a) Belonging to the theatre. (b) In a derogatory sense of anything or anybody considered arti-

- Throw Line**      ficial, affected, assumed, or extravagant.  
 Sash cord or rope used for lashing flats together.
- Time Sheet**      The stage manager's schedule of the time taken to play each act, the length of the intervals, and the total time taken in performance of a play.
- Tormentor**      A return on each side of the proscenium for the purpose of masking the actors from view of the audience after their exits.
- Tragedian**      An actor who plays leading parts in tragedy.
- Tragedienne**      A woman actor who plays leading parts in tragedy.
- Tragedy**      A play with a fatal or disastrous conclusion.
- Traps**      Holes cut in the stage floor sufficiently large to allow an article or person to be lowered to the mezzanine floor.
- Try Back**      A direction at rehearsal to repeat a scene or part of a scene.
- Try-out**      A test performance of a play in the provinces prior to its appearance in a metropolitan theatre.
- Tumble**      To fly scenery by pulling up top and bottom together thus folding it in two; employed where height for flying is restricted.
- Type**      A part of a defined character. A play cast to type is a play in which the parts are given to actors who specialise in certain characters; a part cast to type is a part given to an actor who by art or nature is considered to be like the character to be represented.

## U

<b>Understudy</b>	An actor employed to rehearse and study a part and to be present at a performance in readiness to take the place of an actor unable through illness or other causes to perform his part.
<b>Up Stage</b>	Toward the back of the stage.

## W

<b>Walking-on</b>	To take a part without dialogue.
<b>Wardrobe</b>	A stock or collection of costumes.
<b>Warning</b>	A signal for the tabs or stage "effect," followed by the cue "Go."
<b>Wings</b>	(a) The sides of the stage outside the acting area. (b) Flats used as scenery set at an angle on each side of the stage with space between for the entrance of the players.
<b>Working Area</b>	The part of the stage at the sides used by the stage hands.
<b>Working Light</b>	An independent light on the stage used for working by.

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